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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF

THE REV. JAMES HERVEY, A.M.

RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVELL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOLUME III.

CONTAINING

THERON AND ASPASIO;

OR

A SERIES OF DIALOGUES AND LETTERS UPON THE MOST IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

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THERON AND ASPASIO;

OR, A

SERIES OF DIALOGUES AND LETTERS

ON THE

MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

DIALOGUE XIV.

ASPASIO was employed in preparing for his journey. Theron, free from business, and disengaged from company, had the greatest part of the day to himself, which he spent in reviewing the substance of their late conferences, not without intermingling aspirations to God for the guidance of his divine Spirit.

At evening he went, like the patriarch of old, "into the field to meditate," Gen. xxiv. 63.; amidst the calm of nature to meditate on the grace of the gospel. The sky was peculiarly beautiful, and perfectly clear; only where the fine indigo received an agreeable heightening by a few thin and scattered clouds, which imbibed the solar rays, and looked like pensile fleeces of purest wool. All things appeared with so mild, so majestic, so charming an aspect, that, intent as he was upon a different subject, he could not but indulge the following soliloquy.

"How delightful are the scenes of rural nature! especially to the philosophic eye, and contemplative mind. I cannot wonder that persons in high life are so fond of retiring from a conspicuous and exalted station, to the covert of a shady grove, or the margin of a cooling stream; are so desirous of quitting the

smoky town and noisy street, in order to breathe purer air, and survey the wonders of creation, in the silent, the serene, the peaceful villa.

"It is true, in the country there are none of the modish, I had almost said, meretricious ornaments of that false politeness, which refines people out of their veracity; but an easy simplicity of manners, with an unaffected sincerity of mind. Here the solemn farce of ceremony is seldom brought into play, and the pleasing delusions of compliment have no place. But the brow is the real index of the temper, and speech the genuine interpreter of the heart.

"In the country, I acknowledge, we are seldom invited to see the mimic attempts of human art: But we every-where behold the grand and masterly exertions of divine power. No theatre erects its narrow stage, surrounds it with puny rows of ascending seats, or adorns it with a shifting series of gorgeous scenery: But fields extend their ample area, at first lightly clad with a scarf of springing green, then deeply planted with an arrangement of spindling stalks; as a few more weeks advance, covered with a profusion of bearded or husky grain; at last, richly laden with a harvest of yellow plenty.

"Meadows disclose their beautiful bosom, yield a soft and fertile lap for the luxuriant herbage, and suckle myriads of the fairest, gayest flowers; which, without any vain ostentation, or expensive finery, outvie each other in all the elegance of dress. Groves of various leaf, arrayed in freshest verdure, and liberal of their reviving shade, rise in amiable, in noble prospect all around. Droves of sturdy oxen, strong for labour, or fat for the shambles; herds of sleeky kine, with milk in their udders, and violets in their nostrils; flocks of well-fleeced sheep, with their snowy lambkins frisking at their side—these compose the living machinery. Boundless tracts of bending azure, varnished with inimitable delicacy, and hung with starry lamps or irradiated with solar lustre, form the stately ceiling; while the early breezes, and the evening gales,

charged with no unwholesome vapours, breeding no pestilential taint, but fanning the humid buds, and waving their odoriferous wings, dispense a thousand sweets, mingled with the most sovereign supports of health. And is not this school of industry, this magazine of plenty, incomparably more delightful, as well as infinitely less dangerous, than those gaudy temples of profuseness and debauchery, where sin and ruin wear the mask of pleasure, where Belial is daily or nightly worshipped with what his votaries call modish recreation, and genteel amusement?

"Here indeed is no tuneful voice to melt in strains of amorous anguish, and transfuse the sickening fondness to the hearer's breast: No skilful artist, to inform the lute with musical enchantment, to strike infectious melody from the viol, and soothe away the resolution and activity of virtue in wanton desires or voluptuous indolence. But the plains bleat, the mountains low, and the hollow circling rocks echo with the universal song. Every valley re-murmurs to the fall of silver fountains, or the liquid lapse of gurgling rills. Birds, musicians ever beauteous, ever gay, perched on a thousand boughs, play a thousand sprightly and harmonious airs.

"Charmed, therefore, with the finest views, lulled with the softest sounds, and treated with the richest odours, what can be wanting to complete the delight? Here is every entertainment for the eye, the most refined gratifications for the ear, and a perpetual banquet for the smell, without any insidious decoy for the integrity of our conduct, or even for the purity of our fancy.

"O ye blooming walks and flowery lawns, surrounded with dewy landscapes! how often have patriots and heroes laid aside the burden of power, and stole away from the glare of grandeur, to enjoy themselves in your composed retreats! * Ye mossy couches, and fragrant bowers, skirted with cooling cascades!

* ——— "Mihi me reddentes agelli,"—says Horace of his little country-seat.

how many illustrious personages, after all their glorious toil for the public good, have sought an honourable and welcome repose in your downy lap!* Ye venerable oaks and solemn groves! woods that whisper to the quivering gale, cliffs that overhang the darkened flood! who can number the sages and saints that have devoted the day to study, or resigned a vacant hour to healthy exercise, beneath your sylvan porticoes and waving arches? that, far from the dull impertinence of man, have listened to the instructive voice of God, and contemplated the works of his adorable hand amidst your moss-grown cells and rocky shades? How inelegant, or how insensible is the mind, which has no awakened lively relish for these sweet recesses, and their exquisite beauties!"

But whither am I carried? Is not this rural enthusiasm? I find myself talking to trees, and forget the momentous question which waits for our decision. Here, then, let my rhapsody end, and my inquiry proceed.—Does it betray a want of true delicacy, to be insensible of nature's charms? My Aspasio thinks it argues as wrong a taste in practical divinity, not to acquiesce in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. To this doctrine I have been always extremely averse. I set myself to oppose it with objections, drawn from the reason of things, and from various passages of Scripture; to all which my friend replied. And though I was scarcely convinced, yet I was silenced by his answers.

I pleaded for the sufficiency of our sincere obedience, especially when accompanied with repentance, and recommended by the merits of Christ. Neither was this attempt successful: His arguments, somewhat like the flaming sword planted at the entrance of paradise, "turned every way," Gen. iii. 24. and precluded all access to life on the foot of our own duty.

* ——— "Lucis habitamus opacis,
Riparumque toros, et prata recentia rivis
Incolimus." VIRGIL.

At length, Aspasio quitted the defensive, and attacked me in his turn. He explained the precepts, and enforced the threatenings of the divine law. So exact its tenor, that it demands a perfect and persevering conformity to every injunction. So extensive its authority, that it reaches the inmost thoughts; and requires obedience, not barely in the actions of the life, but the very intentions of the heart. So inexorable its severity, that it condemns every the smallest offence, and curses every the least offender.

This remonstrance had some of the terror, and almost all the effect, of a masked battery. It was quite unexpected, and alarmed me considerably. To push his advantage, he enlarged upon the infinite purity of God: A God, glorious in holiness, who cannot look upon evil with any connivance, or without the utmost abhorrence; before whom the heavens are unclean, and who will in no wise clear the guilty.

To complete his victory, he played off the doctrine of original guilt, and original depravity: That, besides the imputation of Adam's apostasy, besides the commission of numberless iniquities, we were born in sin; are, by nature, enmity against God; in all our faculties corrupt; in every imagination evil; and even when renewed* by grace, are still, still tainted with some base remains of the old leprosy.

After all, he bid me consider—what fruits must spring from such a nature; how they must appear, when compared with such a law; what they must deserve, when tried before such a God. These, I must confess, are very weighty and startling queries. If these representations are true, the face of human affairs carries a most gloomy aspect; or rather, a most dreadful storm is hanging over the children of men. Aspasio urges me to fly, without any delay, to the

* "Even when renewed."—For a display of this important truth, and a remedy against this stubborn evil, let me refer the reader to a little treatise published by Dr Owen, and entitled, "The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers."

covert of Christ's meritorious obedience. This, he says, was wrought out in my name and in my stead; this will be admitted, both at the throne of grace and the bar of judgment, as my justifying righteousness.

This, he adds, opens a way, on God's part, for the largest emanations, and most honourable exercise of mercy. On man's part, it founds a title to pardon, to life, and every spiritual blessing. This doctrine, especially in such a connexion, begins to put on a more recommending appearance. My prejudices are really wearing away. I am almost a convert.

Aspasio overheard the close of these reflections. Unwilling to interrupt his friend in so serious an inquiry, and desirous to observe the issue of so interesting a debate, he had hitherto concealed himself. But thinking this a favourable minute, he stepped forward and said,—

Asp. Almost! and why not altogether a convert? What should hinder my dear Theron from submitting to so rational a scheme with the most entire acquiescence? What should hinder him from embracing so comfortable a doctrine with the utmost complacency? Why should he not subscribe, both with hand and heart, that divine decree, "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord?" Isa. liv. 17.

Ther. If by this doctrine the claims of the law are answered—if the perfections of God are glorified—if the interests of morality are secured—I must acknowledge, it will be more worthy of acceptance than I could once have imagined.

Asp. And if these points are not gained, gained too in the most eminent manner, I solemnly declare, that I will never plead for imputed righteousness more.

But the claims of the law are all answered. For there is nothing in its sacred injunctions, which Christ did not perform; and nothing in its awful threatenings, which Christ did not sustain. He fulfilled all its precepts, by an unspotted purity of heart, and the most perfect integrity of life. He

exhausted its whole curse, when he hung upon the cross, abandoned by his Father, and a bleeding victim for the sins of his people. This obedience brings higher honour to the divine law, than it could have received from the uninterrupted duty of Adam, and all his posterity, in all their generations.

The perfections of God, which were dishonoured by our rebellion, are glorified. He appears, by this method of justification, inconceivably rich in shewing mercy, yet steady, inflexibly steady, in executing vengeance. The sceptre of grace, and the sword of justice, have each its due exercise, each its full scope. The holiness of the divine nature, and the dignity of the divine government, are not only maintained, but most magnificently displayed. Indeed, it is the peculiar excellence of this wonderful expedient, that it renders all the divine attributes supremely venerable, and supremely amiable.

Ther. But are the interests of morality secured?—This is what I am strongly inclined to doubt. And, to say the truth, this is now my principal objection to your scheme.

Asp. I shall never blame my friend for being vigilant and jealous over the interests of morality. If our doctrine had a malignant aspect on true morality, I would give my voice against it, and use all my endeavours to suppress it. But it is formed with every tendency to awaken the utmost dread of sin, and affect us with the warmest sense of our Creator's love. And is not that the strongest barrier against the encroachments of vice? Is not this the sweetest inducement to the practice of virtue?

I am glad to find that a jealousy for the interests of morality is the chief obstacle in the way of your assent; because I am persuaded it is much of the same nature with those forbidding and mistaken apprehensions which our ancestors entertained concerning the ocean. They looked upon it as an unsurmountable obstruction to universal society: whereas it is, in fact, the very cement of society; the only

means of accomplishing a general intercourse, and the great highway to all the nations of the earth. What is here affirmed may, on some future occasion, be proved. At present let me desire you to imagine, rather may the blessed Spirit enable you to believe, that your sins are expiated through the death of Jesus Christ—that a righteousness is given you, by virtue of which you may have free and welcome access to God, the merit of which you may plead for obtaining all the blessings of time and eternity. Then let me ask, Will this alienate your affections from your Almighty Benefactor? will this irritate evil concupiscence, or send you to carnal gratifications in quest of happiness? Quite the reverse. When this faith is wrought in your heart, nothing will be so powerful to produce holy love and willing obedience, to exalt your desires and enable you to overcome the world.

What says the apostle? "I through the law am dead to the law," Gal. ii. 29. Being made to understand its spirituality and perfection, I have no longer any hope of justification from my own conformity to its precepts. Did this prompt him, did this imbolden him to neglect or violate his duty? Hear the sacred writer's own declaration:—I am released from the rigour and bondage of the law; I am directed to Christ for righteousness and salvation; "that I may live unto God;" that my whole life may be devoted to his honour, who has brought me into a state so delightful, into a liberty so glorious.

Ther. This liberty, I am afraid, will be of very little service to the licentious and gay world.

Asp. I shall be in no pain even for the gay world, if once they cordially receive this grace, and are vitally influenced by this doctrine; which, far from dissolving the least obligation to obedience, or weakening any one principle of piety, adds to every other motive, the endearing engagements of gratitude and the winning persuasives of love.

Nay, I verily believe, that multitudes in the gay *and licentious* world are held fast in the fatal snare,

by their ignorance of this sweet, alluring, consolatory truth. They find themselves deeply obnoxious to divine justice, and feel themselves strongly bound with the chains of sensuality. They think it is impossible to clear the enormous score of their guilt; impossible to deliver themselves from the confirmed dominion of sin: Therefore, like desperate debtors, they stifle every serious thought; lest a consciousness of their long arrears, and a prospect of the dreadful reckoning, should "torment them before the time," Matth. viii. 29.

But if they were informed, that the infinitely merciful Son of God has undertaken to redeem such undone and helpless sinners; that he has thoroughly expiated the most horrid transgressions, and procured, even for ungodly wretches, all the needful supplies of strengthening grace; that, instead of being prohibited, they are invited to partake, freely to partake, of these unspeakable blessings: were they acquainted with these glad tidings of the gospel, surely they would burst their chains, and spring to liberty. These truths, if once revealed in their hearts, would, of all considerations, be most effectual to "make them free," John viii. 32.

What shall I say more to obtain my Theron's approbation? Shall I point out and plead the most illustrious precedents?—God the Father is well pleased with this righteousness of our Redeemer. He expresses his complacency by the most emphatical words: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth, Isa. xlii. 1. In Christ and his righteousness, God is not only pleased, but "delighted;" his "very soul," every perfection of the Godhead, with ineffable satisfaction, rests and acquiesces in them.—I said ineffable; for he has declared this, in a manner superior to all the energy of language, by raising our crucified Surety from the dead, by exalting him to the heaven of heavens, and placing him at his own right hand in glory.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is well pleased. He esteems it his honour to shine forth as the everlasting right-

eousness of his people: It is the brightest jewel of his mediatorial crown. In this he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied:" accounting himself fully recompensed for all the labours of his life, and all the sorrows of his death, when sinners are washed from their guilt in his blood, and presented faultless by his obedience.

The Holy Spirit is equally pleased with this great transaction, and its noble effects. It is his peculiar office, and favourite employ, to convince the world of their Saviour's righteousness: not only that his nature was spotlessly pure, and his conversation perfectly holy; but that from both results a righteousness of infinite dignity and everlasting efficacy; sufficient, throughout all ages sufficient, for the acceptance and salvation of the most unworthy creatures.

Since then this method of acceptance and salvation is excellent and glorious in the eyes of the adorable Trinity; since it magnifies the law, and yields the most exalted honour to its divine Author; since it makes ample provision for the holiness of a corrupt, and the happiness of a ruined world; why should my friend any longer dislike it, oppose it, or treat it with a cold indifference? Surely, all these grand recommendations are enough to overrule any little objections which may arise from the suspicions of timidity, or may be started by the artifices of sophistry.

Ther. I know not how it is, Aspasio; but I cannot reconcile myself to this doctrine of imputed righteousness, notwithstanding all the pains you have taken to make me a convert.

Asp. The disappointment is mine, but the loss is yours, Theron. However, let me entreat you not to reject my sentiments absolutely, nor to condemn them prematurely. Suppose it possible, at least, that they may be true, and weigh them in an even balance. Learn wisdom from your Aspasio's folly. I was once exactly in your situation; saw things in your light, and through your medium.

Conversing, I well remember, with a devout, but

plain person, our discourse happened to turn upon that solemn admonition, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," Matth. xvi. 24. I was haranguing upon the import and extent of the duty; shewing, that merely to forbear the infamous action, is little. We must deny admittance, deny entertainment at least, to the evil imagination; and quench even the enkindling spark of irregular desire. When I had shot a random bolt, my honest friend replied, "There is another instance of self-denial to which this injunction extends, and which is of very great moment in the Christian religion: I mean the instance of renouncing our own strength, and our own righteousness; not leaning on that for holiness, nor relying on this for justification." I thought the old man, I must confess, little better than a superstitious dotard; and wondered at (what I then fancied) the motley mixture of piety and oddity in his notions. But now I discern sense, solidity, and truth in his observation: Now I perceive, that we ourselves are often the dreamers, when we imagine others to be fast asleep.

Ther. I shall not forget your caution, and will endeavour to avoid the rock on which my Aspasio struck, but happily, it seems, escaped shipwreck. You may likewise assure yourself, that, upon a subject of exceeding great and eternal consequence, I shall not fail to use the most attentive and impartial consideration. An indolent supineness or a bigotted obstinacy in this great crisis of affairs, would be of all errors the most inexcusable, and must prove of all miscarriages the most fatal.

Asp. But still you cannot reconcile yourself. And no wonder. For this way of salvation runs directly counter to the stream of corrupt nature. It puzzles our reason, and offends our pride. What? shall we not work, but "believe unto righteousness?" Rom. x. 10. Shall we receive all freely, and reckon ourselves no better than unprofitable servants? This is a method to which we should never submit; this is a proposal which we should always spurn, were not

our sentiments rectified and our hearts new-moulded by sovereign grace.

Let me remind you of a little incident which you must have read in the Grecian history. A certain stranger came one day to dine with some Lacedemonians. They, you know, always sat down at a public table, and were content with the plainest food. The gentleman, accustomed to higher eating, could not forbear expressing his disgust at the homely provision. Sir, said the cook, you do not make use of the sauce. What do you mean? replied the guest. You do not use hard exercise, nor habituate yourself to long abstinence, nor bring a sharpened appetite to the meal.—And you, my dear friend, I am apprehensive, have not the sauce; have not the proper preparative for this salutary doctrine, which is indeed the bread of life, and the very marrow of the gospel.

Ther. What preparative?

Asp. A sense of your great depravity, your extreme guilt, and your utterly undone condition.—While destitute of these convictions, our souls will be like the full stomach, that loathes even the honeycomb. So long as these convictions are slight, and hover only in the imagination, we shall be like Gallio,* listless, indifferent, and "caring for none of these things." But when they are deep and penetrate the heart, then the righteousness of a Redeemer will be sweet, tasteful, and inviting; as myrrh and frankincense to the smell, as milk and honey to the palate, as gold and treasures to the ruined bankrupt.

Ther. What method would you advise me to use, in order to get these convictions impressed on my heart?

* Acts xviii. 17. A late commentator, of distinguished eminence, has attempted to vindicate Gallio's conduct, and would represent it as an amiable instance of prudence and moderation.

According to my apprehension, this Roman governor acted a part both irreligious and unjust: *Irreligious*, because he refused to hear the apostle's defence, which was the most likely means of his conversion and salvation. *Unjust*, because he permitted Sosthenes, then an innocent person, afterwards a disciple of Christ, (1 Cor. i. 1.) to be so illegally treated, and outrageously abused, without interposing for his rescue.

Asp. Endeavour to understand God's holy law. Consider how pure, how extensive, how sublimely perfect it is. Then judge of your spiritual state, not from the flattering suggestions of self-love, nor from the defective examples of your fellow-creatures, but by this unerring standard of the sanctuary. Above all, beseech the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to send his enlightening Spirit into your soul. For indeed, without the enlightening influences of the Spirit, we may have the divine law in our hand, we may comprehend its grammatical meaning, yet be like blind Bartimeus under the meridian sun. It is the blessed Spirit alone who can rend the veil of ignorance from our minds, and shew us either "the wonderful things of God's law," or the glorious mysteries of his gospel. In this sense, our polite poet speaks a truth as singularly important as it is elegantly expressed:

> He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
> And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day.—POPE's *Messiah.*

Will you give me leave to propose another expedient, which I believe may be considerably serviceable in this particular case,—which I am assured will be greatly advantageous in many other respects?

Ther. Backward as I am to adopt your doctrine, I am no enemy to my own interest; therefore shall not only give you leave to propose, but give you thanks for communicating so valuable an advice.

Asp. It is, in reality, none of mine. It was long ago recommended by your old acquaintance Horace.* It consists in keeping a diary.

Compile a secret history of your heart and conduct. Take notice of the manner in which your time is spent, and of the strain which runs through your discourse; how often the former is lost in trifles, how

* "Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
Credebat libris; neque si male cesserat usquam
Decurrens alio, neque si bene: quo sit, ut omnis
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
Vita senis." HORAT. *Sat.*

often the latter evaporates in vanity. Attend to the principle from which your actions flow; whether from the steady habitual love of God, or from some rambling impulse, and a customary propensity to please yourself. Minute down your sins of omission; how frequently you neglect to glorify your Creator, to edify your fellow-creatures, and to improve yourself in knowledge and holiness. Observe the frame of your spirit in religious duties—with what reluctance they are undertaken, and with what indevotion performed; with how many wanderings of thought, and how much dulness of desire: how often, in the common affairs of life, you feel the inordinate sallies of passion, the workings of evil concupiscence, or the intrusion of foolish imaginations.

Register those secret faults, to which none but your own conscience is privy, and which none but the all-seeing eye discerns. Often review these interesting memoirs. Frequently contemplate yourself in this faithful mirror. An artist some time ago took a survey of your estate, drew the form and measured the dimensions of each enclosure, pictured out every hedge, and scarce omitted a single tree that grew upon the premises. Act thus with your will, your understanding, your affections. These are your noble internal demesne, of which none but yourself can be a competent surveyor.

Ther. It is unreasonable and preposterous, I must acknowledge, to be minutely exact in meaner matters, and use no accuracy of inspection in the most momentous affairs; to have a correct draught of our lands, which are a transient inheritance, and no map of that everlasting possession—the soul.

Asp. Gratify me then, my dear Theron, in this particular. As I purpose to set out very early in the morning, I shall insist upon it that you do not rise before your usual time in order to compliment my departure. But I now make it my last wish, and my parting request, that you will for some months at least keep a diary.

You have wondered at my opinion concerning the corruption of our nature, and the insufficiency of our own righteousness. This may seem strange, this may appear shocking, to a mind unacquainted with itself. But when you have searched your heart by this probe—when you have felt the pulse of your soul by self-examination—then you will be better able to judge of my sentiments, and enter into the reasons of my faith.

By this means we shall also discover the sins that most easily beset us, which most frequently elude our vigilance, and baffle our resolution. We shall learn how to post our guard, when to exercise the strictest watch, and where to direct the artillery of prayer. In a word, we shall learn, better than from ten thousand volumes, to *know ourselves*: a knowledge which was supposed by the ancient philosophers to descend from heaven, and which, I believe, our Christian divines will allow, has a happy tendency to lead people thither; because, of all other preparatives, it best disposes them for that blessed Redeemer, who is the way, the only way, to those blissful mansions.

Now I have mentioned a way, let me suppose you travelling through an unknown country. You come to a place where the road divides itself into two equally inviting parts. You are at a loss which track to pursue. Whose direction will you chuse to follow? That man's who has passed through neither of them; that man's who has passed through one of them only; or that man's who has passed and repassed them both? To wait for an answer, would be an affront to your judgment. Only let me observe, that the last is your Aspasio's case. He has travelled long, and proceeded far, even in your path. All that circumspection and assiduity, all that prayer and self-denial, all that fasting and alms, and every other means of grace could do, in order to establish a righteousness of his own, has been done: But to no purpose. He has also trod every step in the way which he recommends to his beloved friend. He has made the trial; can set

his *probatum est* to whatever he advises; and may very truly say, with his divine Master, "We speak that we do know," John iii. 11. and testify that we have experienced.

Ther. I am sorry to observe, that the night is coming on, and our conversation almost at an end. My regret is increased, by the consideration of your intended journey. Though business obliges you to depart, it will, I hope, afford you leisure to write. This will be some compensation for the want of your company.

Yonder sun is sinking below the horizon, and just taking his leave of our earth. To retard the departing radiance, at least to alleviate the approaching loss, those western clouds catch the rays, and reflect them to our view in a most amusing diversity of colours. By this means we enjoy the great luminary in his beams, even when his orb is withdrawn from our sight. —An epistolary correspondence has something of the same nature. Letters may be called the talk of absent friends. By this expedient, they communicate their thoughts, even though countries, kingdoms, or seas intercept their speech. You must therefore promise me this satisfaction; and let me converse with my Aspasio by the pen, when I can no longer have an intercourse with him in person.

Asp. You have anticipated me, Theron. Otherwise, what is now my promise, would have been my request.

I cannot but take notice of another particularity in that magnificent assemblage of clouds. How they varied their appearance, as the lamp of day changed its situation! A little while ago, these curtains of the sky were streaked with orange, or tinged with amber. Presently, they borrowed the blush of the rose, or the softened red of the pink. Ere long, they glow with vermilion, or deepen into crimson. Soon succeeds the purple-tinctured robe of majesty; and as soon (thus transient is all sublunary grandeur!) gives place to the sable veil of evening, or the gloomy pall of

night. Such, I trust, will be the issue of my Theron's present apprehensions. All his splendid ideas of human excellency and self-righteousness will become faint, will lose their imaginary lustre, till at length they fade away, and darken into absolute self-abasement. Then the Sun of Righteousness will be amiable, will be desirable, as the beauties of the dawn breaking upon the shades of night.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—I AM now at the seat of my worthy friend Camillus, where business and inclination will fix me for some weeks. This evening we had a most pleasant ramble. I have met with nothing so agreeable since I left your house, and lost your company.

The time was just arrived, and the scene was fully opened, which furnished our great poet with his fine description:

> Now was the sun in western cadence low,
> From noon; and gentle airs, due at their hour,
> To fan the earth now waked, and usher in
> The evening cool.

At this juncture, Camillus invited me to take the air. We walked several times along a close shady alley, arched with the foliage of filberts. Here, hid from every eye, and the whole world withdrawn from our view, we seemed like monks strolling in their cloisters. Turning short at the end, we enter a parallel range of majestic and uniformly spreading walnut-trees. This transition was somewhat like advancing,

through a low porch, into the aisles of a magnificent cathedral. The broad leaf and large trunk of those lordly trees, their very diffusive spread, added to their prodigious height, give them an air of uncommon dignity. It swells the imagination with vast ideas, and entertains us with a romantic kind of delight, to expatiate amidst such huge columns, and under such superb elevations of living architecture.

Quitting our cathedral, we turn once again, and pass into a grand colonnade of oaks; so regular in their situation, so similar in their size, and so remarkably correspondent in every circumstance, that they looked like the twins of nature, not only belonging to the same family, but produced at the same birth. Through these lay a walk, straight, spacious, and gracefully long, far exceeding the last in the extent of its area, though much inferior in the stateliness of its ceiling. It put me in mind of that divine benignity, which has allowed us six days for the prosecution of our own comparatively low affairs, and set apart but one for the more immediate attendance on the sublime exercises of devotion.

This walk was covered with the neatest gravel, and not a weed to be seen, nor one spire of grass, through the whole extended surface. It stole into a continual ascent, yet so very gradually, that the rise was scarce discernible, either by the searching eye, the toiling feet, or the panting breath. At the extremity, a handsome summer-house shewed a flight of steps, and half a Venetian door. The rest of the building was hid by the clustering branches.

As soon as we enter the apartment, Camillus throws open the left-hand sash, and with it a most enlarged and amusive prospect. The structure appeared situate on the brow of a considerable eminence, whose sides were partly confused and wild with broken rocks, partly shagged and perplexed with thorny shrubs. The spectator is agreeably surprised to find himself accommodated with so elegant a mansion, on the summit of so rude and ruinous a spot. But how greatly

is his surprise and satisfaction augmented, when he casts his eye forward, and beholds the beautiful meads which, from the foot of this rugged hill, stretch themselves into a space almost unmeasurable!

Through the midst of this extensive vale, which was decked with the finest verdure, and replenished with the richest herbage, a river rolled its copious flood—rolled in a thousand serpentine meanders, as though it had lost its way in the flowery labyrinth, or made repeated efforts of flowing back to its source, till at last, having wandered more than twice the length of the meadows, having held a mirror to the aspiring poplars and bending willows, having paid a welcome salute to several ornamented villas, and passed through the arches of two or three curiously pendent bridges, it seemed to meet the sky, and mingle with the horizon.

Opposite to the front window, a cascade fell from the adjacent stream. It flashed and foamed along the broad slope, indented with small pits, and jagged with protuberant stones. The current, vexed and embarrassed, seemed to rave at the intervening obstacles, and forcing its rapid, indignant, sonorous way, struck the ear with a peal of liquid thunder. These fretful waters—let our angry passions observe the admonition, and follow the example—soon were pacified, soon forgot to chide. Collected into a little rivulet, they ran off in calm and silent lapse, till they lost themselves amongst beds of osier and plantations of alder.

The river, widening as it flowed, was parted here and there by several little islands; some tufted with reeds, and the resort of swans; some adorned with stately porticoes, and splendid alcoves, the graceful retreats of rural pleasure; some furnished with green embowering walks, fitted for studious retirement and sedate contemplation. On either side of the charming valley, towns and villages lay thick, and looked gay, adding ornament and variety to the scene, and receiving innumerable advantages from the passing wave.

The whole recalled to an attentive observer's mind that amiable and august spectacle, which the Syrian soothsayer could not behold without a rapture of delight, Numb. xxiii. 7.: "From the top of the rocks I see the tribes of Jehovah, and from the hills I behold the habitations of his chosen people. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth; as gardens by the river's side; as trees of exquisite fragrance,* which the Lord hath planted; as cedars of stateliest growth, flourishing beside the waters."

We had but just looked about us when a messenger came for Camillus. As he was called to settle some private affairs, I chose to stay in this inviting retreat; and determined to make myself amends for the loss of Camillus's company, by beginning a correspondence with my Theron. We have pen, ink, and paper, in all our rural retirements, that if any thing is started in discourse, or occurs in meditation, worthy to be remembered, it may immediately be committed to writing.

I could not but observe to my friend, that, fine as the prospect appeared, there was one decoration wanting; if some grand deformity may be called a decoration. The ridges of a bleak and barren mountain, or the skirts of a sun-burnt tawny heath, would give additional liveliness to the ornamented parts of the landscape, and make their beauties strike with double vigour. This also, by shewing us what wretched abodes and inhospitable quarters might have fallen to our share, would awaken in our hearts a more fervent gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of things; who has cast our "lot in a fairer ground, and given us a more goodly heritage."

So, a proper knowledge of the divine law—of its

* Numb. xxiv. 5, 6. It is well known that the original word is used in the sacred writings, to denote either a delightful perfume, Prov. vii. 17. or that aromatic plant which produces it, Cant. iv. 14. For which reason, I think it very justifiable to render the expression, "trees *of exquisite fragrance,*" and am persuaded it will be far more intelli*gible to the generality of* readers, than "trees of ligu-aloes."

sublime perfections and rigorous sanction—joined with a conviction of our own extreme deficiency and manifold transgressions;—all this would endear the blessed Jesus to our affections, and powerfully recommend his righteousness to our desires. The remainder of this epistle, therefore, shall turn upon some instances of duty enjoined in that sacred system: by which it may be highly useful to examine our conduct and sift our hearts; in which, I believe, we have all fallen short, and are all become guilty; from which we may learn the imperfection of our best services, and see the inexpressible need of a better righteousness than our own.

The knowledge of God is the foundation of all vital religion, and indeed is the consummation of human happiness. It is not only matter of present duty, but the very essence of our future bliss: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. Yet, important and obligatory as it is, are we not very defective in this divine science? Have we duly acquainted ourselves with the marvellous excellencies of the Lord Jehovah? his uncontrollable power, and all-comprehending wisdom; his unbounded goodness, and unwearied patience; his immaculate holiness, and inflexible justice; his never-failing faithfulness, and inviolable veracity? Have we, according to the direction of our inspired tutor, pursued this sacred study on our knees? James i. 5.; and sought this most noble of all intellectual endowments, not merely from books, but principally at the throne of grace? Have we sought it, like that ancient Jewish student, with an early application and with incessant assiduity, even "from the flower till the grape was ripe?" Eccl. li. 15.

Is that scanty ray of knowledge, which perhaps has forced itself through our original darkness, operative on our affections? "Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart?"—"This is the first and great *commandment!*" *Matt. xxii. 38.* Have we constant-

ly entertained the most magnificent and honourable thoughts of his sublime perfections? Is our esteem for this immensely great and most blessed Being, high, superlative, matchless? somewhat like that expressed by the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Have we been affectionately concerned for his glory, and zealous to advance his holy religion? troubled, very sensibly troubled, when our Maker's honour has been trampled in the dust, by licentious tongues or flagitious deeds?

Have we made it our ruling care to approve the whole of our life, and the most secret transactions of our breast, to his all-seeing eye? resolved, deliberately resolved, to sacrifice not only our darling lusts, but even our most valuable interests, whenever they stand in competition with the good pleasure of his will? In a word, as the hart panteth after the water brooks, with such vehement and inextinguishable ardour have we thirsted after a brighter manifestation of his divine attributes, some sweeter assurances of his special love, and an ever-increasing conformity to his holy image?

Such was the temper of those excellent men, who are characterized in the Scriptures of truth as children of the Highest, and patterns for our imitation. This is their language: "The desire of our soul is unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early," Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. Neither is such warmth of love and fervour of desire any needless or extravagant pitch of devotion, but a reasonable service, indispensably due from all intelligent creatures to the great Author of their being, in whom all possible perfections, with the utmost exaltation and dignity, reside; from whom all manner of blessings, in the most copious and never-failing communications, flow.

When we receive from an absent friend rich and repeated presents, casks of generous wine, or jars of

delicious fruit, we feel ourselves enkindled into a grateful affection. We honour, we love the person who allows us such a distinguished place in his heart, and expresses his cordial regard by such a series of active and tender benevolence. The blessed God is a friend to us all, infinitely powerful, and equally munificent. We are the constant objects of his more than friendly—of his parental cares. Every passing moment is a messenger of his patience, and charged with some token of his bounty. For our sake he has diffused blessings over all the face of the earth, and commanded every element to concur in ministering to our accommodation. He has not only adapted his benefits to our several wants, but has given them a diversification large as the scope of our wishes, and an enrichment far beyond all that our fancy could conceive. Profuse liberality! yet small and scanty compared with his most adorable benignity in Christ Jesus.

What if God, willing to manifest the superabundant riches of his kindness, had made bare the arm of his omnipotence, and struck a most miraculous road through the surges of the ocean, to afford us a safe passage:—if, to accommodate us in our travels, he had brought waters out of the flinty rock; and bid the ravens bring meat to our hands, bid the winds convey manna to our doors:—if, to furnish us with a commodious settlement, he had dethroned mighty kings, dispossessed populous nations, and made the walls of impregnable cities fall to the ground:—if, to further the dispatch of our business, or facilitate the conquest of our enemies, he had arrested the sun in his meridian career, and laid an embargo upon the moon, setting out on her nightly tour:—In short, if, to promote our welfare, he had suspended the powers, and controlled the laws of universal nature; had wrought all the miracles exhibited in the land of Egypt, or recorded in the volumes of inspiration;—should we not think ourselves under the most inviolable engagements to love the Lord our God, "who had done so great

things for us?" to love him unfeignedly and ardently, to love him with a supreme affection, far above every other amiable object? Yet we have greater, incomparably greater, obligations to our almighty benefactor. For (hear, O heavens! wonder, O earth! and let eternity dwell upon the stupendous truth!) "God spared not his Son,—his own Son"—his transcendently glorious and divinely excellent Son,—but delivered him up to the deepest humiliation, and to the most accursed death, for us men, and our salvation.

O, Theron, have we been impressed with wonder at the contemplation of this goodness? Have our hearts glowed with gratitude under a sense of these mercies? Surely no man need be convicted of any other crime at the great tribunal, than insensibility of such love, and ingratitude for such favours. This, without the accession of horrid impieties, is enough to leave him absolutely inexcusable. This is enough to prove him one of the most disingenuous and detestable of creatures.

Have we exercised ourselves in frequent thanksgiving? Many are the exhortations to this honourable duty. "Praise thy God, O Zion," Psal. cxlvii. 12.; "praise him for his mighty acts," Psal. cl. 2.; "praise him according to his excellent greatness." Innumerable are the incitements to abound in this pleasant service. Every comfort has a voice, and cries in the ear of reason, "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness!" Every deliverance enforces the address, and furnishes fresh materials for the heavenly employ. The man after God's own heart declares, as an inviting example for our practice, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth," Psal. xxxiv. 1. "Yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God," Psal. cxlvi. 2. Indeed, when we consider the inexhaustibly rich bounty of God our Creator, and the inconceivably tender mercy of God our Redeemer, it is both strange and deplorable that the love of God is not always prevailing in our hearts,

and the language of praise ever flowing from our lips.

I will not suppose our character so irreligious, that we have neglected the daily worship of God, either in our closet or in our family: But have we prayed with that profound reverential awe, which is due to the high and lofty One "who inhabiteth eternity?" Have we made our supplications with that fervent importunity which may, in some measure, correspond with the extreme indigence of our state, and the invaluable worth of the blessings we crave? Have our petitions been attended with that steady affiance, which may glorify the goodness, the power, the veracity of the Lord? may evidently declare that he "is rich in mercy to all that call upon him," Rom. x. 12.; that he "is the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength," Isa. xxvi. 4.; "that he is the God of truth, and faithful for ever," Deut. xxxii. 4. We call him Father; but have we trusted in him with that unsuspecting, cheerful, filial confidence, which a child reposes on the fidelity and indulgence of such an earthly relative? Have we not entertained, too often entertained, narrow, dishonourable, beggarly apprehensions, concerning the treasures of his liberality, and the bowels of his pity; rating them even lower than our parents, our friends, or our own?

Have we been careful to carry the spirit of our prayers into our ordinary conversation, and waited at the door, as well as approached to the throne of grace? Amidst the intervals of our solemn devotions, have we cultivated an ejaculatory intercourse with heaven? How highly would the ambitious courtier prize, and how frequently would he use a privy key, which should give him, at all hours, free admittance to his sovereign. This key of admittance, only to an infinitely more exalted Potentate, we all possess in the practice of mental aspirations to God. It is certainly the noblest employ, and will be the richest improvement of our thoughts, to send them in such short embassies to the King of kings; and to derive,

by such occasional sallies of faith* a renewed supply from the Fountain of all good. How great a loss then must it be to our spiritual interests, and how contemptuous a disregard of the ever-present Jehovah, to omit entirely, or long to discontinue, this most beneficial practice of habitual adoration?—Can you, my dear Theron, acquit yourself on this article of inquiry? Has not every day of your life been a day of negligence in this respect; been a perpetual disobedience to our Saviour's injunction, "Men ought, in this manner, always to pray, and not to faint?" Luke xviii. 1.

Have we sanctified the Sabbath? Has the Lord's day, with all its solemn and sacred offices, been our delight? Have we remembered that distinguished portion of our time, as Jacob remembered the delightful interview at Peniel? Have we expected it, as merchants expect the arrival of a richly laden vessel? Have we improved it, as husbandmen improve the shining hours of the harvest? Have we wholly laid aside every earthly engagement, "not speaking our own words," Isa. lviii. 13. nor allowing

* We have, in Scripture, very remarkable instances of the success which has attended ejaculatory prayer. Observe Nehemiah: He stands before Ahasuerus, apprehensive of the monarch's displeasure, yet desirous to solicit him in behalf of Jerusalem. To be delivered from his fears, and to obtain his desires, what method does he use? The mean and servile arts of flattery? No; but the manly and devout expedient of prayer. I prayed, says the patriot, to the God of heaven.—We cannot suppose, that he fell on his knees, or spoke with his lips, while he continued in the royal presence. But he darted up his soul in silent supplication; which supplication pierced the clouds, reached the eternal throne, and returned not again till a blessing was sent; such as totally averted the wrath he dreaded, and procured favour and assistance much larger than he expected. Neh. ii. 4.

When David heard that Ahithophel, the ablest politician in his kingdom, was revolted to Absalom; sensible what a loss his affairs had sustained, what an advantage the rebellious party had acquired, he betook himself to his God. He staid not for an opportunity of retirement, but instantly and upon the spot cried, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"—A short address, but very efficacious. He who disappointeth the devices of the crafty, sent a spirit of infatuation among the rebels; and inclined them to reject the advice of that judicious statesman. Which false step brought upon their horrid enterprise the ruin it deserved, and chagrined the wretched traitor, even to rage, frenzy, and suicide. 2 Sam. xv. 31. xvii. 23.

ourselves in any gratifications that may interrupt our communion with the Father of Spirits? Has "one day in his courts been preferable to a thousand," Psalm lxxxiv. 10. spent either in the works of our calling, or in the scenes of recreation? Have the memorials of our Redeemer's dying merits, and the seals of his unchangeable loving-kindness, been relished as a feast, and prized as a portion?

Have we honoured God's holy word? What greater mark of disesteem than to despise a person's discourse, and not to think his speech worthy of our notice? especially when he addresses us with very great seriousness, and with the utmost affection. In our Bible, the God of glory speaks to his creatures, speaks with the most persuasive energy, and with all the yearnings of paternal tenderness. Have we listened to our Creator with reverence and delight; and rejoiced with trembling at—"Thus saith the Lord?"

Have we searched the oracles of truth, not merely as scholars, but as sinners; not from a spirit of curiosity, or with an air of formality, but with a solicitude and ardour becoming persons who inquire after the Saviour of their lost souls? Have we submitted our inmost thoughts to their impartial scrutiny; to receive conviction of sin from their awful remonstrances, and to hear the sentence of condemnation at their righteous bar? Have we been willing to suffer the reproach of conscious baseness, while they have ripped up the disguises of falsehood, laid open our secret iniquities, and brought all our evil ways to remembrance? Thus Josiah acted: "His heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord: he rent his clothes, and wept before the Lord, when he heard the words of the book of the law," 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27.

Have we hid the glad tidings of the gospel within our memories, within our hearts? Have we been diligent to suck this "honeycomb" (Cant. v. 1.) of grace, by concomitant meditation, and subsequent prayer?

Have we valued the precious promises, as gentlemen of wealth value the writings of their private estates; or as enfranchised bodies esteem the charter of their public privileges? Have we, like the princely patriarch, longed for those words of edification, exhortation, and comfort, more than for our necessary food? Job xxiii. 12.; and, like the royal prophet, prevented the night watches, that we may be occupied in those statutes and ordinances of heaven? Psalm cxix. 148.

We have hitherto confined the examination to a few instances of the affirmative kind: How dreadfully will the dark account be swelled, if, instead of love and obedience, there be hatred and opposition—hatred of the name, glory, and worship of God—opposition to his interest, kingdom, and service?

God is infinite perfection, worthy of all admiration, exalted above all praise. Yet do not our thoughts more frequently, or more naturally, turn upon our own accomplishments, than upon the adorable and shining attributes of the Almighty? This is, in itself, the most shameful dotage; and, in God's sight, the most abominable idolatry. Yet let us observe what passes within, and we shall probably find, that as damps arise in the mines, or fogs in the fenny grounds, so naturally and so copiously do these overweening reflections arise in our depraved minds.

God is an everlasting King. Have we not too often resisted his authority? Have we not, as far as in us lay, deposed the omnipotent Sovereign, and exalted self into the throne? made self-will our law, and self-pleasing our end? thus adding sacrilege to rebellion?

God is transcendently gracious and amiable. Have we not turned our backs upon him, by forgetting his mercies? Nay, have we not spurned him from our affections, by being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?" 2 Tim. iii. 4. Awake, conscience! bear thy impartial testimony; and I am persuaded, the Pharisee in our breasts, like the man unfurnished with the wedding-garment, must be struck dumb, must be covered with confusion.

Is our heart warm with brotherly love? Good manners will put expressions of civility into our mouths; but has a power from on high implanted the royal law of charity in our breasts? The character of a gentleman requires a deportment accessible, obliging, and courteous; has the spirit of Christianity taught us to love, "not in word," or plausible appearance only, "but in deed and in truth?" 1 John iii. 18. Do we love our neighbours, not merely on account of some relation they bear us, or some services they have done us; but because they are creatures of the blessed God, are the objects of his providential care, and capable, at least, of being conformed to his image? Do we love them, because we hope that the Lord Jesus Christ has bought them with his blood; is willing to make them partakers of his Spirit, and members of his mystical body?

Are we sincerely concerned for their present welfare and their eternal happiness? Do we embrace all opportunities of promoting both the one and the other? embrace them with the same alacrity, and improve them with the same zeal, which actuate us in seeking our own felicity? If they exceed us in all that is amiable, and all that is prosperous, do we contemplate their superior excellence with a real complacency, and their more abundant success with a real satisfaction?

Do we dislike to hear, and abhor to spread, defamatory tales, even when our adversaries are the men whom they tend to blacken? When rudely affronted, or causelessly abused, do we pity the offenders for the wrong done to their own souls, rather than kindle into resentment at the indignity offered to ourselves? When greatly injured, are we slow to anger, and not easily provoked? Are we much more willing to be reconciled, than to foment displeasure and prosecute revenge? In a word, do we "love our enemies; bless them that curse us; do good to them that hate us; and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us?" Matth. v. 44. Without this loving and lovely disposition, we abide, says the apostle, in

death, 1 John iii. 14.; are destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life.*

Let me add—Are all our graces, and all our works, "clothed with humility?" This should be the dress in which they severally appear, as well as the bond of connexion which unites them all. Do we maintain a very low opinion of our own accomplishments, and "in honour prefer others to ourselves?" Rom. xii. 10.; habitually sensible that we are less than the least of the divine mercies, and the very chiefest of sinners?

I might easily have branched out the preceding subjects into a much greater variety of interrogatory articles. But I intend only to present you with a specimen. Your own meditations will enlarge the sketch, and supply what is defective. Only let me beg of you, my dear friend, to try your state by this touchstone, to prove your conduct by this standard. And may the Father of lights give you an understanding to discern the exact purity and sublime perfection of his holy law!

Have you lived in the uninterrupted observance of all these duties, avoiding whatever is forbidden, and obeying whatever is commanded? Your outward behaviour, I know, has been free from notorious violations; but has your inward temper been preserved from all ungodly motions, and from every irregular desire? Is there no enmity in your heart to any of the precepts; nor any backwardness, nor any failure in performing each and every injunction?

When you put these questions to yourself, remember that if you fail in one point, or in any degree, you are guilty of all; James ii. 10. If your conformity be not persevering as well as perfect, you incur the penalty, and are abandoned to the curse; Gal. iii. 10.

* What manner of love is this? How disinterested! how extensive! how triumphant! Must not all the boasted benevolence of the philosopher and moralist strike sail to this evangelical charity? Must not both moralist and philosopher acknowledge the necessity of a divine operation, thus to enlarge, exalt, and refine their social affections?

You stand charged, before the Judge of the world, with all the guilt of all your sins, both original and actual; and there is not one circumstance, nor one aggravation, of any of your iniquities, overlooked or forgotten—unless, renouncing all your personal performances, you place your whole affiance on a Saviour's atonement and a Saviour's righteousness. I think you will not dare to put the issue of your everlasting state upon the former footing, which is not only hazardous, but must be inevitably ruinous. You will infinitely rather chuse to acknowledge yourself a poor insolvent, and plead the unsearchable riches of your Redeemer's obedience.

To those who believe, the law, though strict, is not terrible; because, be its precepts of holiness ever so extensive, they have been most completely fulfilled by their glorious Surety. Be its penal sanctions ever so rigorous, they have been satisfied to the utmost by their great Mediator. Believers therefore may make their boast of their adorable Sponsor; they "may sit under his shadow with great delight," Cant. ii. 3.; while the thunderings of Mount Sinai, and all the terrors of the legal dispensation, tend only to increase and quicken the refreshing sense of their safety: Just as the possessor of a plentiful estate, in some peaceful and prosperous country, reposes himself under the shade of his vine, or the shelter of his fig-tree; and, hearing of the wars which embroil, or the plagues which depopulate other nations, tastes with augmented relish his own felicity.

Let me close with the affectionate and emphatical wish of an inspired epistolary writer—"That the Lord of Peace may give" my dear Theron "peace—always by all means!" 2 Thess. iii. 16. Then I shall think my wishes are accomplishing, and this blessing is at the door, when he sees the purity of the divine law—sees the depravity of his own nature—and the impossibility of being justified without an interest in the great Mediator's righteousness: That righteousness which, as it is the only hope and the constant

joy, is therefore the darling theme, of your ever faithful ASPASIO.

P.S.—Shall I abridge the preceding letter, and contract the whole into those two great commandments which made the first awakening impressions on my own mind? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Amazing! said your Aspasio. Are these the commands of God? as obligatory as the prohibition of adultery, or the observation of the Sabbath? Then has my whole life been a continual act of disobedience: Not a day, no, nor an hour, in which I have performed my duty. This conviction struck me, as the handwriting upon the wall struck the presumptuous monarch. It pursued me as Saul pursued the Christians, not only to my own house, but even to distant cities; nor ever gave up the great controversy, till, under the influences of the Spirit, it brought me "weary and heavy laden to Jesus Christ."

LETTER II.—THERON TO ASPASIO.

DEAR ASPASIO,—MORE than three weeks are elapsed since you favoured me with your improving company, during which interval I have frequently recollected the most material parts of our late discourses. I have carefully considered both the doctrines you advanced and the answers you returned to my several objections. I have often reviewed your valuable letter, have used it as a touchstone to examine my state, and have with great punctuality observed your parting advice. I have sat every evening for a picture of my mind; and have endeavoured to take a true unflattering draught of all its distinguishing qualities. And if the diary is a faithful mirror, if it does not aggravate the deformity of my features, I shall be absolutely out of conceit with myself: I

shall ever entertain the meanest opinion of my own, either moral or religious, qualifications.

Where is that intense and supreme love of God which his transcendent perfections challenge, and his ineffable goodness claims? Where that firm and joyful reliance on Christ Jesus in any degree proportioned to his infinite merits and inviolable promises? Where that cordial and tender affection for my fellow Christians, which is due to the servants of a divine Redeemer; the people whom he ransomed by his agonies, and purchased with his very blood? Where is the incense of holy contemplation and refined desire? where the flame of fervent devotion and ever active zeal; such as become the living temple of God, in which his most immaculate and glorious Spirit vouchsafes to reside? These fundamental graces, like the grand organs in the animal system, should impart health to the soul, and spread the beauty of holiness through all the conversation. But these, alas! far from beating with a vigorous and uniform pulse, hardly heave with life; only just struggle, now and then, with some faint, intermitted, uneven throes.

How seldom do my actions spring from gratitude to the everlasting Benefactor, or aim at the glory of his superexcellent majesty? In addressing the King immortal, invisible, how languid are my affections, and how wandering is my attention! how great my unbelief, and how little my reverential awe! I receive innumerable mercies; but where are my returns of correspondent thankfulness? I am visited with many gracious chastisements; but without proper resignation, or due improvement. Alas, for my heartless devotions, my lifeless virtues, and the multitude of my refined iniquities! Hid behind the mask of outward decency, and some customary forms of religion, I was altogether unacquainted with my spiritual state. I fancied myself "rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing;" even while I was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17.

If I look back, and review the years of youth and manhood, what has been the tenor, what is the aspect of my life? More like a desolate and horrid wilderness, than a cultivated garden, or a fruitful vineyard. In youth, what sordid gratifications of appetite! In manhood, what base compliances with a wicked world! In both, what shoals of evil inclinations have polluted my heart! what swarms of vain imaginations have debased my thoughts! what frothy and unprofitable words have dropt from my lips! By all which, how have I disobeyed, and how dishonoured God! how have I denied, and how crucified the Lord Jesus Christ! and yet supposed myself, all the while, to be good enough!

It is something unaccountable, that a person of my inquisitive disposition should, through the course of so many years, be such an utter stranger to himself. I wonder at my own preposterous folly! To travel into foreign countries, and visit the most renowned cities of Europe; yet never step over the threshold, nor look within the apartments of my own breast! To carry on a correspondence with my friends, even in the remotest nations; and never enter upon a conference, nor hold any intelligence with my own heart! To inquire after news from the fleet, news from the army, news from the court; yet exercise neither curiosity nor care with regard to the hope of heaven, and the concerns of eternity! What egregious misconduct is this! A most pernicious error in the economy of religious life!

Sometimes I have cast a transient glance on my outward behaviour, but never extended my search to the delinquent, the traitor, the rebel within. And even my outward behaviour has been surveyed with as much erroneous partiality as superficial levity. It has been compared, not with that exact and sublime standard, the Scriptures of truth; but, as in the case of the self-deceiving Pharisee, with the unjust, extortionate, adulterous practices of some other people. From whence I most unwarrantably concluded, that

being not quite so abandoned as the most profligate creatures, my character must be good, and my condition safe. But, thanks to your last friendly letter, and the searching expedient it recommended, I am now in a different way of thinking.

It is strange to recollect, and indeed it is shameful to confess, the many artifices which I have used to put a cheat upon myself. Sometimes I have fancied that the divine law could never be so strict as to condemn us inexorably, if we continue not in all its precepts. Sometimes I have pleaded the infirmity of our nature, and endeavoured to make the works of darkness appear only as pitiable failings. Sometimes I have taken refuge in the excellency of our church, and plumed myself with the borrowed feathers of a religious profession. At other times I have soothed my conscience to rest, by a punctuality of attendance on places, or a zealous attachment to forms. And all this to seduce, cajole, and betray myself;—betray myself, first into a vain conceit of my own endowments, then into a contemptuous disregard of Christ, and at last into eternal destruction. But now I see my guilt, I apprehend my danger, and feel my helpless condition.

Indeed, my Aspasio, I am now convinced that the darkest colours cannot be too dark for the portrait of my spiritual state. I see myself overspread with an habitual depravity, and cannot forbear crying out, with the abashed leper, "Unclean! unclean!" Lev. xiii. 45. The sacred oracles in no wise misrepresent fallen man, when they describe him as altogether become abominable, Job xv. 16. They are far from underrating human works, when they denominate them "filthy rags." * Rags they are, if we consider their great imperfections; filthy rags, if we advert to

* Isa. lxiv. 6. Does not Theron misapply this text? Can it be intended to discredit the qualifications of the upright? Is it not rather a brand set upon the works of the wicked, whose very sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord? Or, a rebuke given to the specious performances of the hypocrite, who is precise in the form, but destitute of

their manifold defilements. And since the nature of God is so irreconcileably averse to all contamination, since the law of God requires such unspotted perfection, O! "who can stand before this holy Lord God," 1 Sam. vi. 20. in any accomplishments of their own?

When I farther reflect, that I have only a very obscure glimpse of the divine purity, and am a mere novice in the knowledge of my own heart; how am I amazed at the lofty apprehensions which I once formed concerning the dignity of my nature and the integrity of my conduct! All owing to ignorance, the grossest ignorance, of myself and the Scriptures. How do I shudder to think, that, in expecting justification from the law, I was resting the welfare of my immortal soul, not on the foundation of a rock, but on the point of a dagger. I was going to the decisive tribunal, flushed with the falsest hopes, and charged with a set of glittering sins; going, like poor deluded Uriah, 2 Sam. xi. 14, 15. not with any valid credentials, but with "the ministration of death," 2 Cor. iii. 9. in my hand.

Though I cannot but acknowledge the arrogance of these pretensions, yet loath, very loath, is my pride to renounce the pleasing absurdity. Self-love has searched, and searched again, for something excellent. It would fain make a better appearance, and can hardly brook the humiliation of imploring all *sub forma pauperis.** With what reluctance is a sinner brought to confess himself sinful in every duty, sinful in every capacity? Strange perverseness! But

the power of godliness? Or, may it not refer to ritual observances, in contradistinction to moral duties and spiritual accomplishments?

The disparaging character must not, I think, be confined to ritual observances; because it is expressly said, *all our righteousness*, including every kind of religious duty: Neither can it be appropriated to the formal hypocrite; much less to the notoriously wicked; because those very persons who are the subject of this assertion declare, in the context, "Lord, we are thy people; thou art our Father; we shall be saved." So that it seems intended to stain the pride of all human glory.

* That is, under the character of a poor destitute, or as a beggar sues for his alms.

the charge is undeniable. However unwilling, I must plead guilty. "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting," Dan. v. 27. is evidently written on all I am, all I have, all I do. And if I am thus defective, even in my own estimation; if I am utterly condemned at the bar of my own conscience, "what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" Job xxxi. 14.

I now see the necessity of an imputed righteousness. Without some such object for my trust, I am undone. I long, therefore, to hear your arguments in its behalf. And I must declare to you, if it can be satisfactorily proved from the Scriptures, it is the most comfortable doctrine in the world, and worthy of all acceptation.

A letter upon this subject would be a singular favour, and I hope an equal blessing, to your obliged and affectionate THERON.

LETTER III.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—THOUGH all your letters give me pleasure, none was ever so highly pleasing as your last. I look upon it with the same secret joy as a compassionate physician observes some very favourable symptoms in the crisis of a beloved patient's distemper.

What you ask, I shall, without any farther preface, attempt to execute. If my attempt proves satisfactory to your judgment, I am sure it will be the most likely means of healing your conscience, and calming your fears. When we perceive the odious depravity of our nature; when we discern the horrible iniquity of our lives, and are sensible of that tremendous wrath and everlasting vengeance which are due to such guilty creatures; then nothing can be found that will speak effectual peace, nothing that will ad-

minister solid comfort, but only the vicarious sufferings and the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To this purpose speaks one of the wisest and best of spiritual guides: "Has sin abounded?" as undoubtedly it has, in our heart and our life; "grace has much more abounded," in the obedience and the merits of our Redeemer. Nay, "has sin reigned?" exerted its malignant power in the most extensive and most destructive manner, rendering us subject unto death, both temporal and eternal? "Even so has grace reigned;" exerted its benign efficacy, and in a manner yet more triumphant; not only rescuing us from guilt and ruin, but restoring us to everlasting life and glory; and all this through the righteousness, the complete meritorious righteousness, brought in "by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 21.

You inquire after the proofs of this imputed righteousness. From a multitude I shall select a few; sufficient, I hope, to make it appear, that this is the declared doctrine of our church, and the avowed belief of her most eminent divines; that it is copiously revealed through the whole Scriptures, revealed in many express passages, and deducible from a variety of instructive similitudes.

Hear the language of our Common Prayer, in a very affecting and solemn address to the Almighty: "We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness." If we may not, if we dare not, rely on our own righteousness when we approach the eucharistic table, much less may we depend upon it when we are summoned to the decisive tribunal. Should you ask, on what we are to depend? The exhortation to the communion furnishes an answer: "On the meritorious death and passion of Christ, whereby alone we obtain remission of sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

The Collect appointed for the festival of circumcision has this remarkable introduction: "Almighty God, whose blessed Son was obedient to the law for

man." In what sense, or with what propriety, can this be affirmed, unless Christ's perfect obedience be referable to us, and accepted instead of ours? On any other interpretation, I should think he was obedient, not for man, but for himself.

Should the artful critic give some other turn to these passages, it will avail him but little; because the church, her own best expositor, has explained the meaning of such phrases, and put the matter beyond all doubt. In her eleventh article she says, "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The doctrine relating to pardon of sin had been stated in a preceding article. This displays the method whereby sinners may appear righteous in the eye of God and in the court of heaven, so as to recover the divine favour and obtain a title to eternal bliss. This is done, not by any native righteousness, not by any acquired righteousness, but by an imputed righteousness. Were we justified by either of the former methods, it would not have been said, we are *accounted*, but we *are* righteous. They are so far from constituting our reconciling and justifying righteousness, that they have no share in it, contribute nothing towards it, are totally excluded from it. We are accounted righteous, and accepted as such, *only*, (mark the expression) *only* through the meritorious obedience, and propitiating blood of our great Mediator.

The Homilies are, if it be possible, still more explicit and more cogent. In the Homily concerning the salvation of mankind, we read the following words: "The apostle toucheth three things, which must go together in our justification: On God's part, his great mercy and grace: On Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body, and the shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly: On our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us." You see, according to the judgment of our venerable re-

formers, not only the offering of Christ's body, and shedding of Christ's blood, but also his perfect fulfilling of the law, are the adequate price of our redemption. All these act conjointly; they sweetly harmonize in the great and glorious work. To suppose their disunion, is a doctrinal mistake, somewhat like that practical error of the Papists, in severing the sacramental wine from the sacramental bread; administering to the laity the symbols of the slaughtered body, but withholding the symbols of the streaming blood.

There are other clauses in the same Homily, which set the seal of the church to our sentiments. I shall content myself with transcribing one from the conclusion. "Christ," says that form of sound words, "is the righteousness of all them that do truly believe. He, for them, paid their ransom by his death. He, for them, fulfilled the law in his life. So that now, in him, and by him, every true Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the law; forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacked, Christ's righteousness hath supplied." This authority is as clear, as the doctrine authorized is comfortable. May the former sway our judgment! may the latter cheer our hearts!

The Homily on Christ's nativity informs the reader, that the design of our Lord's incarnation was—"to give light unto the world, and call sinners to repentance; to fulfil the law for us, and become the propitiation for our sins; to cast out the prince of this world, and destroy the works of the devil." We have all broke the law; we are all unable to keep the law; therefore the blessed Jesus fulfilled the law; fulfilled it in each and every of its demands; fulfilled it in the highest degree of perfection; and what is of all considerations most delightful, fulfilled it for us. His obedience took the place of what we were obliged to perform under the covenant of works; and is not only the meritorious, but also the constituent cause of our justification.

So that, if there be any worthiness in our Lord's

most holy nature, any merit in his exercise of the sublimest virtues, completed by his submission to the most ignominious sufferings and tormenting death; then, according to this standard system of orthodox divinity, these are the ground, these are the substance of a sinner's justification. And, according to the dictates of the most unbiassed reason, they are the best, the surest ground that can either be wished or imagined.

Does it not from the preceding quotations appear, that the doctrine of justification, through the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, is far from being disclaimed by the established church? I am sorry, but constrained to own, that we rarely find any considerable strictures of this great evangelical peculiarity in our modern theological discourses. Yet there have been preachers of the highest repute for learning, for judgment, and for piety, who professedly maintained this grand truth of the gospel.

The devout Bishop Beveridge, in his "Private Thoughts," has left upon record the following very remarkable acknowledgment, which, if it suited his state of eminent holiness, cannot be too humbling, my dear Theron, for your lips and for mine. "I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed, in all my lifetime, with that reverence, or heard with that attention, or received the sacrament with that faith, or did any work with that pure heart and single eye, as I ought to have done. Insomuch, that I look upon all my righteousness but as filthy rags; and it is in the robes only of the righteousness of the Son of God, that I dare appear before the Majesty of heaven."

The fervent and affectionate Bishop Hopkins * speaks in perfect consonance with his brother of St Asaph. "The law was given us, not that we should seek justification by the observance of it, but finding it impossible to be justified by fulfilling it, we should thereby be driven to Christ's righteousness, who hath

* See his Sermon on John vii. 19.

both fulfilled it in himself, and satisfied for our transgressing of it; and therefore saith the apostle, 'The law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' To this end it was promulged, that seeing the strictness of its precepts, the rigour of its threatenings, and withal being convinced of our impotence to fulfil its commands, we might be urged by its terrors to fly to Christ, and find that righteousness in him which may answer all the demands of the law."

Bishop Reynolds,* styled by his contemporaries, and not without reason, "a walking library," bears his testimony in the following words: "Christ as our surety paid our debt, underwent the curse due to our sins, and bare them all in his own body on the tree; became subject to the law for us, and representatively in our stead fulfilled all the righteousness the law required, active and passive. For sin being once committed, there must be a double act to justification; the suffering of the curse, and the fulfilling of righteousness anew. The one, a satisfaction for the injury we have done to God as our Judge; the other, the performance of a service which we owe unto him as our Maker."

To this illustrious triumvirate, let me join Bishop Davenant, who for his great abilities and unquestionable integrity, was appointed one of our religious plenipotentiaries at the renowned synod of Dort. In his very valuable exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians, he writes to this effect: "Ye are complete in Christ. Ye are furnished, in that all-sufficient Redeemer, with whatever is requisite to everlasting salvation. With wisdom; since it is the consummation of this noble endowment, to know Christ, and him crucified. With righteousness; because he has perfectly satisfied the law,† and thoroughly expiated our

* See his treatise entitled, The Life of Christ.

† In this respect principally are believers complete; because, though destitute of any righteousness that may properly be called their own, Christ has graciously enriched them with his. *Vid.* DAVENANT *in epist. ad Coloss.* cap. ii. com. 10.

guilt. With sanctification; because his Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, mortifies our corrupt affections, and renews the soul after the image of its Creator."

Let me bring up the rear with a testimony, which for clearness, solidity, and a full representation of the evangelical doctrine, might very justly have claimed a place in the van. It is taken from an author, whom the general consent of our nation has distinguished with the title of "judicious." The judicious Hooker, in a treatise on justification, says—"It is a childish cavil our adversaries so greatly please themselves with, exclaiming, that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, because we teach, That faith alone justifieth. Whereas, by this speech, we never meant to exclude either hope or charity from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith in the man that is justified; or works from being added, as necessary duties required of every justified man; but to shew, that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ to justification; and Christ the only garment which, being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled nature, hideth the imperfection of our works, and preserveth us blameless in the sight of God: before whom, otherwise, the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us out of the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter."

You will allow the sagacious Bishop Sanderson* to sum up the evidence; or rather, to make an important remark on the whole of the controversy. That great light of the church, both in casuistical and practical divinity, observes—"The tidings of a Redeemer must be blessed and welcome news, to those that are sensible of their own poverty, and take it of grace." Our eagle-eyed divine penetrates into the true cause of the prevailing averseness to this evangelical doctrine. It is founded on the state of the heart, more than upon any force of argument.

* See his Sermon on Isa. lii. 3.

People are but little, if at all, sensible of their spiritual and moral indigence; of the defects which depreciate, and the defilements which sully, whatever they have, and whatever they do. Nay, strongly tinctured with pride, they would be themselves the Alpha, and suffer the blessed Jesus to be no more than the Omega, in procuring their eternal salvation. Therefore they can hardly be reconciled to the humbling character of an eleemosynary; one who lives wholly upon the alms of the gospel, and is dependent upon grace for his all.

Whereas, was this grand obstacle once removed; were men convinced of sin, of exceeding sinfulness in their worst estate, and of remaining sinfulness in their best; they would soon be "convinced of righteousness," John xvi. 8. of the absolute necessity and inestimable worth of a Redeemer's righteousness. They would no longer dispute against it, but cordially receive it; entirely rely on it; and adore the goodness, the transcendent and unutterable goodness of God, in providing it.

I think, in one of our conferences, I undertook to produce my vouchers from the ancient fathers. Let me now subjoin two or three attestations of this kind. From one of which you will perceive, that those early writers had a considerable degree of clearness upon the point. From the other you will see, that far from rejecting the doctrine, they embrace it with delight and rapture.—And if you will admit of the last, you cannot be startled at any thing which I shall advance upon the subject. Let me only premise, in general, that if those authors are not so copious and explicit with regard to the imputation of active righteousness, they abound in passages which evince the substitution of Christ in our stead; passages which disclaim all dependence on any duties of our own, and fix the hopes of a believer entirely upon the merits of his Saviour. When this is the case, I am very little solicitous about any particular forms of expression; and far from being angry, even though the words which I think most significant are not retained.

Clemens—an intimate acquaintance of St Paul's, and whose "name was in the book of life," Phil. iv. 3. in his truly excellent epistle to the Corinthians, assures that people,* "We are not," in any respect, or in any degree, "justified by ourselves," but wholly by Jesus Christ; "not by our own wisdom or prudence," which could never find out the way; "not by the piety of our hearts, or works of righteousness performed in our lives," which could never be sufficient for the purpose; "but by faith:" the one invariable method, "by which the Almighty Sovereign has justified all" his people, "ever since the world began."

Justin, who was first a Gentile philosopher, then an eminent Christian, and at last a martyr for the truth, speaks more fully to the point:†—"What else could cover our sins, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ? By what possible means could we, unrighteous and unholy creatures, be justified, but only by the interposition of the Son of God in our behalf?"—Having in this clause made a profession of his faith, the good man, on the contemplation of such a privilege, breaks out into a kind of holy transport: "O sweet and delightful exchange! a dispensation unsearchably wise and gracious! benefits quite unexpected, and rich beyond all our hopes! that the sin of many should be hid by one righteous Person, and that the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors!"

* Ου δι' εαυτων δικαιουμεθα, ουδε δια της ημετερας σοφιας, η συνεσεως, η ευσεβειας, η εργων ων κατειργασαμεθα εν οσιοτητι καρδιας· αλλα δια της πιστεως, δι' ης παντας τους απ' αιωνος ο παντοκρατωρ Θεος εδικαιωσεν. 1 *Epist. ad Corinth.*—This quotation is explained, as well as translated. But that every reader may distinguish the text from the paraphrase, the first is printed within inverted commas.

† Τι αλλο τας αμαρτιας ημων ηδυνηθη καλυψαι, η εκεινη δικαιοσυνη; Εν τινι δικαιωθηναι δυνατον τους ανομους ημας και ασεβεις, η εν τω υιω του Θεου; Ω ΤΗΣ, ΓΑΤΚΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΑΛΛΑΓΗΣ, ω της ανεξιχνιαστου δημιουργιας, ω των απροσδοκητων δι ενος πολλους ανομους δικαιωσεις. *Epist. ad Diogn.* Though Du Pin questions the authority of this epistle, he allows it to have been written by an ancient hand. Dr Cave, as capable a judge, thinks there is no reason to doubt but it is the genuine work of Justin.

The following words are remarkably strong, and the sentiments peculiarly bold. But they come from the pen of the finest writer in ecclesiastical antiquity. They have the great name and venerable character of St Chrysostom for their recommendatory preface. * "Fear not," says he, "on account of any of thy past transgressions of the law, when once thou hast fled by faith to Jesus Christ. The most enormous and the most destructive violation of the law is, to be withheld, by the consciousness of any guilt whatever, from believing on Christ. When thou actest faith on him, thou hast fulfilled, I might say more than fulfilled, the law: For thou hast received a better righteousness than it could ever require; thou art possessed of a better obedience than any creature could possibly pay."

Two or three witnesses of distinguished ability, and undoubted veracity, are a sufficient confirmation of any cause. For this reason, and to avoid a tiresome prolixity, I have set aside a multitude of voices, which, from the writings of our own and foreign divines, are ready to pour their united evidence; and lest the business of quotation, though sparingly managed, should seem dry and tedious, I will relieve your weariness, and enliven the collection, by an extract from the prince of English poetry. Michael, the prophetic archangel, mentioning the destructive consequences of the fall, and asserting the Godhead of that glorious Person who undertook to be the repairer of this deadly breach, adds,

> Which he, who comes thy Saviour, shall secure,
> Not by destroying Satan, but his works,
> In thee and in thy seed. Nor can this be
> But by fulfilling (that which thou didst want)
> Obedience to the law of God, imposed
> On penalty of death; and suffering death,
> The penalty to thy transgression due;
> And due to theirs, which out of thine will grow,
> So only can high justice rest appaid. MILTON, xii. 393.

* Μη τοινυν φοβηθης, ως τον νομον παραβεβηκως, ιστιδαν τη πιστει προσελθης· τοτε γαρ αυτον παραβαινεις, οτι δι αυτον τω Χριστω μη πιστευσης· ως αν πιστευσης αυτω, καλεινον επληρωσας και πολλω πλειον η επλευσε· πολλω γαρ μειζονα δικαιοσυνην ειλαβες. *Homil.* xvii. *in* x. *ad Rom.*

Here then is the express determination of our Homilies, supported by the authority of our Articles, established by the concurrence of our Liturgy, still farther ratified by the unanimous attestation of several celebrated divines, whose lives were the brightest ornament to our church, and whose writings are the most unexceptionable interpretation of her meaning. As a capital to crown and complete this grand column, supervenes the declaration of the ancient fathers, those who flourished, and with the highest renown, in the first and purest ages of Christianity. So that, if great authorities carry any weight, if illustrious names challenge any regard, this tenet comes attended and dignified with very considerable credentials.

Yet I will venture to affirm, that all these, considerable as they appear, are the least of those testimonials which recommend the doctrine to my Theron's acceptance, and which have gained it admittance into the heart of, his most affectionate ASPASIO.

LETTER IV.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—THE family in which I have the satisfaction to reside, though remarkable for their genteel figure and ample fortune, are still more amiably distinguished by their benevolence, hospitality, and charity. As they live at a distance from the market-town, the lady has converted one apartment of her house into a little dispensatory, and stocked it with some of the most common, the most needed, and most salutary medicines, which, in cases of ordinary indisposition, she distributes to her indigent neighbours with singular compassion, and with no small success. This fine morning, Emilia has ordered some skilful hands into the fields, to cull their healing simples, and lay up a magazine of health for the afflicted poor. Camillus is withdrawn to receive his rents, and settle accounts with his tenants.

Suppose we act in concert with these valuable persons. Suppose we range the delightful fields of Scripture, and form a collection, not of salutiferous herbs, but of inestimable texts; such as may be of sovereign efficacy to assuage the anguish of a guilty conscience, and impart saving health to the distempered soul. Suppose we open the mines of divine inspiration, and enrich ourselves, not with the gold of Ophir, but with the unsearchable treasures of Christ; or with that perfect righteousness of our Redeemer, which is incomparably more precious than the revenues of a county, or the produce of Peru.

In pleading for imputed righteousness, we have already urged the authority of our established church, and the suffrage of her most eminent divines. The opinion of excellent writers, which has been the result of much learning, great attention, and earnest prayer, is no contemptible evidence. Yet we must always reserve the casting voice for those infallible umpires, the prophets and apostles. "If we receive," with a deferential regard, "the witness of men; the witness of God is greater," 1 John v. 9., and challenges the most implicit submission; which remark naturally leads me to the intended subject of this epistle, or rather calls upon me to fulfil my late engagement, and shew that the above-mentioned doctrine is copiously revealed through the whole process of the Scriptures.

Let me detach a very significant portion from the epistle to the Romans; which, though little inferior to a decisive proof, is produced only as an introduction to others: "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 21, 22. The righteousness of God signifies, that righteousness which the incarnate God wrought out in his own all-glorious person. It is styled the righteousness of God by way of superlative pre-eminence, in opposition to any righteousness of our own, and in contra-

distinction to the righteousness of all creatures whatever. This righteousness is without the law. Its efficacy has no dependence on, its merit receives no addition from, any conformity of our practice to the divine law; being complete, absolutely complete in itself, and altogether sufficient to procure the reconciliation and acceptance of sinners. This righteousness is "witnessed by the law and the prophets;" receives an uniform attestation from the various writings of the Old Testament. To investigate which attestation, to examine its pertinency, and weigh its sufficiency, is our present pleasing business.

We may begin with that gracious declaration made to the first transgressors: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15.; shall destroy the works of the devil, and retrieve whatever was lost by his malicious artifices. How could this be effected, but by restoring that righteousness which for a while our first parents possessed; which they ought always to have held fast; but from which they so soon and so unhappily swerved. Take the position in the right sense, and Christianity is, if not entirely, yet very nearly as old as the creation. It was comprehended in this blessed promise, as the stamina of the largest plants are contained in the substance of their respective seeds; every subsequent revelation being no more than a gradual evolution of this grand evangelical principle; acting like the vegetative powers of nature, which in rearing an oak, with all its spread of branches, only expand the tunicles, and fill up the vessels of the acorn.

This doctrine seems to have been typically taught by the remarkable manner of clothing our first parents. All they could do for their own recovery was like the patched and beggarly mantle of fig leaves: This they relinquish, and God himself furnishes them with apparel, Gen. iii. 21. Animals are slain, not for food but sacrifice; and the naked criminals are arrayed with the skins of those slaughtered beasts. The victims figured the expiation of

Christ's death; the clothing typified the imputation of his righteousness. In perfect conformity, perhaps with a reference to the passage thus interpreted, the apostle just now expressed himself: "Even the righteousness of God, which is not only made over to all believers as a rich portion, but put upon all as a beautiful garment," Rom. iii. 22.* whereby alone their moral deformity can be covered, and their everlasting confusion prevented. Milton, it is certain, speaking of this memorable transaction, considers it in the same spiritual sense:—

> Nor be their outward only with the skins
> Of beasts, but inward nakedness (much more
> Opprobrious!) with his robe of righteousness
> Arraying, covered from his Father's sight.

"In thy seed," says the great Jehovah to his servant Abraham, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. That the seed here mentioned is Christ, the apostle places beyond all doubt.† Both Scripture and reason declare that true blessedness must necessarily include the pardon of sins and the favour of God, the sanctification of our souls, and the inheritance of life eternal. None of which are to be acquired by any human performances, but all are to be sought, and all may be found, in the root and offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ; who is therefore most pertinently styled, "The Desire of all nations," Hag. ii. 7.; the actual desire of every enlightened nation, and the implicit desire of all nations whatever; because all, without any exception, covet what is to be derived only from Jesus Christ the righteous, real happiness.

The patriarchal age, and the legal economy, bore their testimony to this truth, by typical persons, em-

* ΕΙΣ *παντας*, ΕΠΙ *παντας τους πιστευοντας*.

† See St Paul's comment upon this invaluable promise, Gal. iii. 8. &c. This commentator, we all allow, was guided by the Spirit, and knew the mind of God. According to his exposition of the text, it is pregnant with the doctrine of justification by faith, and contains an abridgment of the gospel.

blematical miracles, and figurative usages. Indeed, the whole ceremonial service was a grand series of types, representing Christ and his everlasting righteousness. In all which this was the unanimous though silent language; "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." These I shall not stay to discuss, because proofs of a more explicit and positive nature wait for our consideration; only I would just make a transient observation, relating to one very remarkable constitution in the Jewish ritual. —The high-priest had on the front of his mitre a plate of pure gold, engraven with that venerable motto, "Holiness to the Lord," Exod. xxviii. 36, 37. which was always to be on his forehead when he performed the solemn ministrations of the sanctuary; and for this important reason, that the people "might be accepted before the Lord," Exod. xxviii. 38. Did not this most clearly foreshow the immaculate holiness of our great High-priest? and with equal clearness imply, that his holiness should procure acceptance for all his followers?

In the book of Job we have several hints of this truth, and one passage very express to our purpose. Elihu describes an unconverted person under the chastising hand of Providence, "whose life," through the extremity of his disease, "drew near to the grave, and his soul," through the multitude of his iniquities, was ready to become a prey "to the destroyers." In this deplorable condition, if there be present with him the messenger* of the covenant of peace, that great interpreter* of the divine counsels, who for his superexcellent wisdom is justly deemed "one among a thousand," or rather "the chiefest among ten thousand;" if he, by his enlightening Spirit, vouch-

* See Job. xxxiii. 22. &c.—Christ is called מלאך, the angel of the divine presence, Isa. lxiii. 9. The messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. He is also, in the most unlimited sense of the phrase, מליץ, the interpreter of the divine counsels; he to whom the Father hath given the tongue of the learned, and by whom he makes known the *otherwise unsearchable* mysteries of the gospel.

safe to shew unto the afflicted man his own perfect righteousness, that most meritorious uprightness on which alone a sinner may depend, both for temporal and eternal salvation; then the poor distressed creature, attentive to this instruction, and applying this righteousness, is made partaker of pardon. God, the sovereign Lord of life and death, is gracious unto him, and saith, in the greatness of his strength, as well as in the multitude of his mercies, "Deliver him from going down into the pit" of corruption, as a pledge of his deliverance from the pit of perdition; for "I have found a ransom" sufficient to satisfy my justice: I have received an atonement in behalf of this once obnoxious, now reconciled transgressor.

But why do I select one particular paragraph? It seems to be the main design of the whole book to overthrow all pretensions of any justifying righteousness in man, that the wretched sinner, nay, that the greatest saint, stript of every personal plea, may rely only on the merits of a Redeemer. This is the final issue of all those warm debates which pass between the afflicted hero and his censorious friends. This is the grand result of Elihu's calm reasoning, and of God Almighty's awful interrogatories. The apparent centre this, (see Job xlii. 6.), in which all the lines terminate; justly therefore to be considered as the principal scope of the whole work.

I must not omit an excellent observation, which I find in some critical and explanatory notes * on the last words of David. The judicious author, proving that this song relates to Christ; that it displays the dignity of our Redeemer, under the character of "The King," and "The Just One," adds, as an explication of the last amiable and glorious title—"Our Lord Jesus Christ is so called, not so much for having fulfilled all righteousness in his own person, and performed an unsinning obedience to the will of God, as because, by his righteousness imputed to us, we

* By Dr Grey. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. &c.

also, upon the terms* of the gospel, are justified, or accounted righteous before God."

I think we may evidently discern the same vein of evangelical doctrine running through many of the Psalms. "He shall convert† my soul," Psal. xxiii. 3.; turn me, not only from sin and ignorance, but from every false confidence, and every deceitful refuge. "He shall bring me forth in paths of righteousness;" in those paths of imputed righteousness, which are always adorned with the trees of holiness, are always watered with the fountains of consolation, and always terminate in everlasting rest. Some, perhaps, may ask, why I give this sense to the passage? Why may it not signify the paths of duty, and the way of our own obedience? Because such effects are here mentioned as never have resulted, and never can result, from any duties of our own. These are not "green pastures," but a parched and blasted heath. These are not "still waters," but a troubled and disorderly‡ stream. Neither can these speak peace or administer comfort, when we pass through the valley and shadow of death. To yield these blessings, is the exalted office of Christ, and the sole prerogative of his obedience.

* That is, freely; or, as the prophet speaks, "without money and without price."

† I am sensible the word יְשׁוֹבֵב may signify to refresh or restore; may answer to the Greek phrase ἀναψυξις, and denote the comforts of the Holy Ghost. This verb may also bear the same signification with the participle ἐπιστρεψας, in our Lord's exhortation to Peter, *when thou art converted;* not describing the first grand revolution in the heart, by which a new determination is given to the judgment, and a new bias to the affections; but expressing those subsequent operations of the divine Spirit, by which we are recovered from our various relapses, and healed of our daily infirmities.

‡ *Blasted, disorderly.*—Let not these words grate on the ear; or, if they grate on the ear, let them humble the heart. What were Job's duties? Zealous and exemplary; practised from his very youth; and neither equalled nor excelled by any person on earth. Yet these, in point of justification, were not a whit better than Aspasio represents. Let us hear the last words of this matchless saint, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." From this confession we learn, that, with all his furniture of personal obedience, he had just enough to be ashamed, confounded, undone.

Admitting that this obedience is of sovereign advantage during the years of life, and in the hour of death, it may still occur to the serious and inquisitive mind, what will be our safeguard after the great change? When the soul departs, and our place on earth knows us no more—when the body revives, and we shall all stand before the judgment-seat—what will then avail us? The same righteousness of our divine Lord. This, if I mistake not, is displayed in the very next Psalm; which begins with a solicitous inquiry, subjoins a satisfactory answer, and closes with a most pertinent but rapturous apostrophe. This is the inquiry, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall rise up in his holy place?" This is the answer, "Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart. He shall receive the blessing" of plenary remission "from the Lord, and righteousness also from the God of his salvation:" even that perfect righteousness, which is not acquired by man, but bestowed by Jehovah; which is not performed by the saint, but received by the sinner; which is the only solid basis to support our hopes of happiness, the only valid plea for an admission into the mansions of joy. Then follows the apostrophe: The prophet foresees the ascension of Christ and his saints into the kingdom of heaven. He sees his Lord marching at the head of the redeemed world, and conducting them into regions of honour and joy. Suitably to such a view, and in a most beautiful strain of poetry, he addresses himself to the heavenly portals: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory," with all the heirs of his grace and righteousness, shall make their triumphant entry; "shall enter in," and go out no more.

Having shewn the powerful and extensive influence of our Redeemer's righteousness—its efficacy in this world to justify, in the other world to glorify—well may the sweet singer of Israel profess his supreme value for it, and entire dependence on it. "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and will make

mention of thy righteousness only."* As though he had said, I will have recourse to no other righteousness for the consolation of my soul. I will plead no other righteousness for the recommendation of my person. I will fly to no other righteousness for my final acceptance and endless felicity. This is that "raiment of needle-work and clothing of wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 13. in which the king's daughter is introduced to him "who sitteth in the heavens over all." This is that "garment for glory and for beauty," which clothed our great High-priest, and descending to his very feet, Rev. i. 13. clothes and adorns the lowest members of his mystical body.

Recollecting all the foregoing particulars, justly, and on the most rational ground, does our royal author declare, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted," Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16. They are truly blessed, they alone are happy, who "know the joyful sound" of the gospel; not only receive it with their ears, but admit it into their very hearts, so as to partake of the sacred peace and spiritual liberty which it proclaims. "They shall walk in the light of thy countenance;" they shall enjoy such communications of thy grace, and such manifestations of thy love, as will constitute the serenity and sunshine of their souls. In thy name, O Lord Jesus Christ, in thy glorious person, and thy infinite merit, "shall they rejoice:" and not occasionally, but habitually; not barely at some distinguished intervals, but "all the day." Their joy shall be as lasting as it is substantial. "And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted;" set above the tantalizing power of temporal things placed beyond the slavish fear of the last enemy; and

* Psal. lxxi. 16. There is, in the Hebrew original and in the new translation, a very emphatical repetition; which adds weight to the sentiment, and demands a peculiar attention from the reader: "Thy righteousness, even thine only."

raised, when time shall be no more, to a state of celestial glory and consummate bliss.

How thoroughly evangelical is this seraphic writer! He has joy, he has blessedness, and he looks for everlasting exaltation; yet not from his faith, his repentance, and his own sincere obedience. According to this, which is the modern scheme, faith, instead of receiving, would supplant the Lord Jesus; repentance, instead of being the gift of Christ, would become his rival; and sincere obedience, which is for the praise and glory of God, would eclipse and impoverish his grace. But David adopts no such sentiments; David maintains no such doctrine. This is the invariable language of his heart: "All my springs of hope, of trust, and consolation, O thou adored Emanuel! are in thee," Psal. lxxxvii. 7.

This sense is the less precarious, I had almost said the more certain, as it exactly corresponds with the analogy of faith, and coincides with the express declarations of other Scriptures. Isaiah is styled the evangelist of the Jewish church; because more frequently than any of the prophets he celebrates, and more copiously explains, this and other peculiarities of the gospel. In the very first chapter, he preaches these glad tidings: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." Zion, the gospel church, composed of fallen creatures, sometime disobedient to their God, and enslaved to Satan, shall be redeemed; redeemed, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold," but by severe judgments executed on their glorious head and gracious representative; and not by these only, but by righteousness also, by the perfect and most meritorious righteousness of the same divinely excellent Person.

Our sacred author bears his testimony with warmer zeal and brighter evidence as he proceeds in his incomparable discourses. "Surely, shall one say," (or, as it *may be rendered, only*) "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. Please to observe,

Theron, it is not said, In my own works, in my own repentance, no, nor in my own faith, but "in the Lord Jesus have I righteousness;" righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification; an imputed righteousness, to procure my acceptance; an imparted strength, to produce my holiness: the first constituting my title to the everlasting inheritance, the last forming my personal preparation for its enjoyment. "Surely," which expresses a firm persuasion, and an unshaken affiance. "Only," which denotes an utter renunciation of all other confidence, and excludes every other ground of hope. "Righteousnesses,"* the original is in the plural number; which seems to be used, not without an important design, to enlarge the significancy of the word, and make it correspond with the richness of the blessing; so that it may imply the fulness and supereminent excellency of this gift of grace; as comprehending whatever, either of suffering or of obedience, is requisite to the justification of sinners. Insomuch that, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his all-perfect righteousness, the seed of Israel shall not only be justified, but rejoice; and not only confide, but glory, Isa. xlv. 25.

What he had just now asserted, he exemplifies in his own, and in the person of every true believer. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," Isa. lxi. 10. True believers are compared, in one of our sacred eclogues, to "a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot," Cant. i. 9.; to horses, than which no animal is more stately and graceful; to Egyptian horses, which were the best and completest then in the world; to those in Pharaoh's chariot, which doubtless were a choice set, selected from thousands, and finest where all were fine. Here, methinks, I see the comparison realized.

* צדקות, parallel to which, both in construction and signification, is the phrase *used by St John*, Δικαιωματα, Rev. xix. 8. "The fine *linen is the righteousness (properly,* the righteousnesses) of the saints."

Christians endued with such a spirit as breathes in this animated text, are like a collection of those gallant and majestic steeds—not destined to low drudgery, but appointed to run in the royal chariot; all life, full of fire, champing the bit, and eager for the chase. Nothing can more beautifully describe a state of exultation and ardour, than the preceding similitude, or the following words: "I will rejoice; I will greatly rejoice; my very soul, and all that is within me, shall be joyful in my God." Wherefore? Because he has clothed me, undone sinner as I am, with the garments of salvation; because he hath covered me, defective as all my services are, with the robe of righteousness: A robe, which hides every sin that, in thought, word, or deed, I have committed; a robe, which screens from the sword of justice, the curse of the law, and all the vengeance my iniquities have deserved; a robe, which adorns and dignifies my soul, renders it fairer than the moon, clear as the sun, and meet for the inheritance of saints in light.

Having represented this righteousness in a variety of grand and charming views, the prophet farther characterizes it, as the unalterable and never-failing origin of our justification and happiness. This he displays by a train of images, bold and sublime to the last degree. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished," Isa. li. 6. Observe the vast dimensions, and the firm foundations, both of the upper and the lower world, how strong, how steadfast they all appear! Yet these, indissoluble as they may seem, shall perish. This majestic globe, on which mountains rise, and oceans roll, shall lose its beautiful gloss, and be laid aside, like a decayed useless garment. Even that more majestic concave, in which stars are fixed, and planets revolve, shall be deprived of its very superior lustre; and vanish away, like the dissolving smoke.

Whereas "my salvation," with all the spiritual and heavenly blessings included in it, shall subsist and flourish for ever: "And my righteousness," which is the meritorious cause of all, shall be an immoveable foundation for repose and happiness. In short, whether there be moral virtues, they shall be found wanting; whether there be Christian graces, they shall prove ineffectual; but my conformity to the law, and my obedience unto death, neither need addition, nor admit of change: they are all-sufficient in their merit, and in their virtue everlasting.

When day arises on our benighted hemisphere, it breaks and spreads by a gradual increase—forming, first the grey twilight, next the blushing morn, then the shining light, till all is heightened into the blaze and glow of noon. When spring revisits our wintry clime, she also advances by gentle degrees; first swells the bud and protrudes the gem, then expands the leaf and unfolds the blossom: the face of things is continually changing for the better, and nature shews herself, almost every hour, in some new and more engaging dress. This leisurely process renders the strong effulgence of the celestial orb more supportable, and the lovely expansions of the vegetable creation more observable.

So progressive and increasing are the displays of Jesus Christ exhibited in the Scriptures, whose appearance is unspeakably more delightful to the soul than the emanations of orient light are to the eye, or the entertainments of the vernal season to our other senses. The gloom of fallen Adam was alleviated by a ray from this Sun of Righteousness. Abraham and the patriarchs saw afar off the blessed Jesus, "as the morning spread upon the mountains," Joel ii. 2. The Psalmist and the prophets beheld his nearer approaches, like the sun upon the point of rising. To the apostles and evangelists, he arose in perfect lustre and complete beauty. The grace and the privileges which dawned under other dispensations of religion, are brought even to meridian

light by the gospel. This I mention, just to intimate what you may expect from a following letter.

In the mean time, let us attend to the prophet Daniel. He records a message from heaven, which is more clearly descriptive of this great evangelical blessing than all the foregoing texts. He had been under much distress, and in great perplexity; afflicted for his own and his countrymen's sins; anxious for the welfare of the chosen nation, and the prosperity of true religion; when an angel was dispatched to the holy mourner with this most cheering news, which, received by faith, is the richest balm to a wounded conscience, and the only remedy for a guilty world: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city; to finish the transgression, and make an end of sin; to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," Dan. ix. 24. This prophecy relates to the Messiah. It foretells that, in the fulness of time, he should "finish the transgression;" restrain and suppress the power of corruption, by purifying to himself a peculiar people;—should "make an end of sin," by sealing up or secreting its guilt, and totally abolishing its condemning power;—should "make reconciliation for iniquity," by sustaining the vengeance due to sinners, and fully satisfying the divine justice for all their offences;—should not barely publish, but accomplish and "bring in a righteousness,"* that it may be presented both to God and man: to God, for the reparation of his violated law; to man, for the justification of his obnoxious person:—That this righteousness should be everlasting; not such as may be compared to the morning-cloud, which passeth away; or to the early dew, which is soon dried up;

* לחכוא, I think, must signify more than to *publish* or *preach*. Had this been all that the angel was commissioned to declare, לבשף, or לכור, would probably have been used. The word implies such a *bringing in*, (the original is the same), as when Abel brought his sacrifice to the altar for the divine acceptance, and Esau brought his venison into the chamber for his father's use, Gen. iv. 4.; xxvii. 31.

but such as will outlast the hills, on which the latter shines; and outlast the skies, through which the former sails: A righteousness, whose merits extend to every period, and every action of our lives; and when once made ours by imputation, remains, and will remain our unalienable property. To this, all the saints who in ancient generations pleased God, owe their acceptance; on this, all the children of men who in future ages hope for his mercy, must rely; by this, the whole assembly of the blessed will be invariably and eternally precious in his sight. Exalted character! Can it be applicable to any thing less than the righteousness of the incarnate God? Surely none can imagine that Daniel would speak in such a magnificent strain of any human righteousness, since, in this very chapter, he professedly depreciates himself, his fellow-saints, and all human performances whatever.

I forgot, in the proper place, to consult the prophet Jeremiah. Let us now refer ourselves to his determination. Celebrating the Saviour of Judah and Israel, he says, "This is his name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness:" A determination so clear and satisfactory, as not to leave, one would almost conclude, any room for appeal. Should the sense of the passage be questioned, I think there cannot be a more authentic explication than the preceding extracts from Isaiah and Daniel. And having the unanimous attestation of two inspired penmen, we may venture to abide by such authority, even in opposition to some respectable names. In the verse immediately foregoing, the essential holiness of the Redeemer is displayed under the character of the Righteous Branch. The sanctity which he will impart to his subjects, is intimated by his "executing judgment and justice in the earth." In the clause we have quoted, his imputed righteousness is foretold and promised. Thus the several sentences are distinct; the description of the Saviour is complete; and he appears perfectly suited to the exigencies of a wretched world; in their worst estate enslaved to

Satan, and in their best falling short of the glory of God. This, therefore, I take to be the grand and extensive meaning of the prophet: The righteous Lord; not barely, the Lord who infuses righteousness into sinful souls; but the incarnate Jehovah, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. whose mediatorial righteousness is, by an act of gracious imputation, ours, to all the intents of justification and salvation; ours, as much ours, for these blessed purposes, as if we had wrought it out each in his own person.

Foreseeing and contemplating these blessings, the enraptured Zechariah cries out, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," Zech. ix. 9. He addresses himself to Zion and Jerusalem, to the ecclesiastical and civil community. Persons of all ranks, and of every character, are exhorted to "rejoice;" to rejoice "greatly;" nay, to express the joy of their heart, by loud hallelujahs and triumphant exclamations. What is the cause of this general delight? what can fill both church and state with such high satisfaction? "Thy King cometh unto thee;" even that glorious King who rules in heaven, and rules in the heart; whose service is freedom, and whose laws are love. "He is just;" divinely righteous in his nature, and he cometh to fulfil all righteousness in thy stead. "Having salvation;" hereby procuring salvation for his people; deliverance from sin, from death and hell; from every evil thou deservest, and from every misery thou fearest. That none may be discouraged, and none deterred, from applying to this Prince of Peace, he is, amidst all the honours of his sovereignty, "lowly;" does not abhor the basest, will not despise the meanest; to the poor his gospel is preached, and for the guilty his benefits are intended. As an emblem, as a proof of this most amiable and condescending goodness, "he will ride," not like the conquerors of old, in a triumphal chariot, or on a

richly-caparisoned steed, but upon the most mean and despicable of all animals, "an ass;" nay, what is still more despicable, on a rude undisciplined "colt, the" wayward "foal of an ass." *

And now, since my Theron confesses himself to be miserable, and poor, and naked; since the eyes of his understanding are enlightened to see the impurity of his heart, the imperfection of his righteousness, and that he is in himself a lost undone sinner; what advice, cheering and salutary, shall I suggest? O! let him listen to an Adviser infinitely more able and compassionate; listen to him who is the Ancient of Days, and the wisdom of God: "I counsel thee," says the blessed Jesus, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed," Rev. iii. 18. Gold! what can this denote, but all those spiritual treasures which are hid in Christ? which are in measure unsearchable,

* Because profane scoffers have presumed to ridicule this very remarkable incident of our Lord's life, some interpreters have endeavoured to rescue it from their abusive attempts, by observing, "That the eastern asses are much larger and more graceful than ours; that patriarchs and judges thought it no disgrace to ride upon them." This observation has, I fear, more of false delicacy, than of real truth, or Christian simplicity. In the patriarchal ages, persons of high distinction thought it no dishonour, in their journeys and processions, to appear on this animal; but I very much question whether the same fashion subsisted, or the same way of thinking prevailed, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. See James iii. 3.—Nay, I find that Solomon had four thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; and that horses were brought to him out of Egypt, and diverse other countries, 1 Kings iv. 26.; x. 28, 29. From this period, it is probable, none but the poor and inferior sort of people rode upon asses. Well, therefore, might the prophet say, with wonder and delight, "lowly, and riding upon an ass!"

Was it a mean attitude? I make no scruple to grant it; nay, I make my boast of it! It is for the honour of our Lord's condescension; it is for the utter confusion of all worldly pomp and grandeur; and it is for the unspeakable comfort of my sinful soul. They who would dignify this action, any otherwise than from its ever-to-be-admired abasement, seem to have forgotten the stable and the manger. They who are offended at this circumstance, and ashamed to own their Lord in his deep humiliation, have but very imperfectly learned the apostle's lesson, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

in value inestimable, in duration eternal. "White raiment!" Surely this must signify the righteousness of our Redeemer, which is all purity, and all perfection; which clothes the soul, as a most suitable and commodious garment; which covers every deformity and every sin; and presents the believer, free from shame and free from blemish, before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This, to use the delicate language and amiable images of Isaiah—this doctrine, embraced by a realizing faith, is the only pillow of rest, "wherewith we may cause the weary and heavy laden soul to find repose;" and this is the sovereign cordial prepared by infinite mercy for the refreshment of anxious and desponding transgressors. O! let us not be in the number of those proud and refractory creatures, who, though they infinitely needed, "yet would not hear" the gracious news, Isa. xxviii. 12. nor receive the unspeakable benefit. In this respect, and in this most eminently, is that other saying of the same sublime teacher true, "The Lord of Hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, to the residue of his people," Isa. xxviii. 5. Shall we tear from our temples, or reject with disdain, this unfading and heavenly ornament, in order to substitute a mean and tawdry chaplet of our own?

Let me add a pertinent passage from one of our celebrated dramatic writers, which, if proper in his sense, will be incomparably more so according to our manner of application:

> ——It were contemning,
> With impious self-sufficient arrogance,
> This bounty of our God, not to accept,
> With every mark of honour, such a gift.

I might proceed to urge this expostulation of the poet, as I might easily have multiplied my quotations from holy writ. But, studious of brevity, I leave both, without further enlargement, to your own meditation. Yet more studious of my friend's happiness, I cannot conclude without wishing him an

interest, a clear and established interest, in this everlasting righteousness of Christ. For so, and so only, can he have "everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."—I am, my dear Theron, inviolably yours, ASPASIO.

P. S.—Opposite to the room in which I write, is a most agreeable prospect of the gardens and the fields; these, covered with herbage and loaded with corn; those, adorned with flowers and abounding with esculents; all appearing with so florid and so beautiful an aspect, that they really seem, in conformity to the Psalmist's description, even to "laugh and sing." Let me just observe, that all these fine scenes, all these rich productions, sprung—from what? From the dissolution of the respective seeds. The seeds planted by the gardener, and the grain sowed by the husbandman, first perished in the ground, and then the copious increase arose.

Much in the same manner a true faith in Christ and his righteousness arises—from what? From the ruins of self-sufficiency, and the death of personal excellency. Let me therefore entreat my Theron still to take the diary for his counsellor; still to keep an eye on the depravity of his nature, and the miscarriages of his life. The more clearly we see, the more deeply we feel our guilt and our misery, the more highly shall we value the obedience of our blessed Surety. In such a heart faith will flourish as a rose, and lift up its head like a cedar in Lebanon. To such a soul the great Redeemer's righteousness will be welcome, as waters to the thirsty soil, or as rivers in the sandy desert.

LETTER V.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—GIVE me leave to relate an uncommon accident which happened a little while ago

in this neighbourhood, and of which I myself was a spectator. The day was the Sabbath; the place appropriated to divine worship was the scene of this remarkable affair.

A boy came running into the church breathless and trembling. He told, but in a low voice, those who stood near, that a press-gang * was advancing to besiege the doors, and arrest the sailors. An alarm was immediately taken. The seamen, with much hurry, and no less anxiety, began to shift for themselves. The rest of the congregation, perceiving an unusual stir, were struck with surprise. A whisper of inquiry ran from seat to seat, which increased by degrees into a confused murmur. No one could inform his neighbour, therefore every one was left to solve the appearance from the suggestions of a timorous imagination. Some suspected the town was on fire: some were apprehensive of an invasion from the Spaniards: others looked up, and looked round, to see if the walls were not giving way, and the roof falling upon their heads. In a few moments the consternation became general. The men stood like statues, in silent amazement, and unavailing perplexity. The women shrieked aloud; fell into fits; sunk to the ground in a swoon. Nothing was seen but wild disorder; nothing heard but tumultuous clamour. Drowned was the preacher's voice. Had he spoke in thunder, his message would scarce have been regarded. To have gone on with his work amidst such a prodigious ferment, had been like arguing with a whirlwind, or talking to a tempest.

This brought to my mind that great tremendous day, when the heavens will pass away, when the earth will be dissolved, and all its inhabitants receive their

* The reader, it is hoped, will excuse whatever may appear low, or savour of the plebeian, in any of these circumstances. If Aspasio had set himself to invent the description of a panic, he would probably have formed it upon some more raised and dignified incident. But as this was a real matter of fact, which lately happened in one of our sea-port towns, truth, even in a plain dress, may possibly be no less acceptable than fiction tricked up with the most splendid embellishments.

al doom. If at such incidents of very inferior ead our hearts are ready to fail, what unknown and conceivable astonishment must seize the guilty con- ience, when the hand of the Almighty shall open ose unparalleled scenes of wonder, desolation, and orror! when the trumpet shall sound—the dead rise—the world be in flames—the Judge on the hrone—and all mankind at the bar!

"The trumpet shall sound," 1 Cor. xv. 52. says he prophetic teacher. And how startling, how stupendous the summons! Nothing equal to it, nothing like it, was ever heard through all the regions of the universe, or all the revolutions of time. When conflicting armies have discharged the bellowing artillery of war, or when victorious armies have shouted for joy of the conquest, the seas and shores have rung, the mountains and plains have echoed. But the shout of the archangel and the trump of God will resound from pole to pole; will pierce the centre, and shake the pillars of heaven. Stronger, stranger still! it will penetrate even the deepest recesses of the tomb. It will pour its amazing thunder into all those abodes of silence. The dead, the very dead, shall hear.

When the trumpet has sounded, "the dead shall arise." In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the graves open, the monumental piles are cleft asunder, and the nations under ground start into day. What an immense harvest of men and women, springing up from the caverns of the earth, and the depths of the sea! Stand awhile, my soul, and consider the wonderful spectacle.—Adam formed in Paradise, and the babe born but yesterday; the earliest ages, and latest generations, meet upon the same level. Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Barbarians, people of all climes and languages, unite in the promiscuous throng. Here those vast armies, which like swarms of locusts covered countries, which with an irresistible sweep overrun empires—here they all appear, and here they all are lost—lost like the small drop of a bucket, when plunged into the unfathomable

and boundless ocean.—O the multitudes! the multitudes which these eyes shall survey, when God "calleth the heavens from above, and the earth, that he may judge his people." What shame must flush the guilty cheek! what anguish wound the polluted breast! to have all their filthy practices, and infamous tempers, exposed before this innumerable crowd of witnesses!—Fly, my Theron; and fly, my soul; instantly let us fly, earnestly let us fly, to the purifying blood of Jesus; that all our sins may be blotted out; that we may be found "unblamable and unreprovable" in the presence of the assembled world, and what is infinitely more to be revered, in the sight of the omnipotent God.

When the swarm issues, the hive will burn: There is no more need of this habitable globe. The elect have fought the good fight, and finished their course: The wicked have been tried, and found incorrigible. The important drama is ended, every actor has performed his part; now, therefore, the scenes are taken down, and the stage is demolished. "Wo be to the earth, and to the works thereof!" Its streams are turned into pitch, its dust into brimstone, and the breath of the Almighty, like a torrent of fire, enkindles the whole. See! see how the conflagration rages, spreads, prevails over all! The forests are in a blaze, and the mountains are wrapt in flame. Cities, kingdoms, continents, sink in the burning deluge. London, Britain, Europe, are no more. Through all the receptacles of water, through all the tracts of land, through the whole extent of air, nothing is discernible but one vast, prodigious, fiery ruin.—Where now are the treasures of the covetous? where the possessions of the mighty? where the delights of the voluptuary? How wise, how happy are they, whose portion is lodged in heavenly mansions! Their "inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled;" such as the last fire cannot reach, nor the dissolution of nature impair.

But see! the azure vault cleaves; the expanse of *heaven is rolled* back like a scroll; and the Judge, the

Judge appears! "He cometh," cries a mighty seraph, the herald of his approach, "he cometh to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment unto the people!" He cometh, not as formerly in the habit of a servant, but clad with uncreated glory, and magnificently attended with the armies of heaven. Angels and archangels stand before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand of those celestial spirits minister unto him. Behold him, ye faithful followers of the Lamb, and wonder and love! This is he who bore all your iniquities on the ignominious cross: This is he who fulfilled all righteousness for the justification of your persons.—Behold him, ye despisers of his grace, and wonder, and perish! This is he whose merciful overtures you have contemned, and on whose precious blood you have trampled.

The great white throne, Rev. xx. 11. beyond description august and formidable, is erected. The King of heaven, the Lord of glory, takes his seat on the dreadful tribunal. Mercy on his right hand displays the olive-branch of peace, and holds forth the crown of righteousness: Justice on his left poises the impartial scale, and unsheathes the sword of vengeance: while wisdom and holiness, brighter than ten thousand suns, beam in his divine aspect. What are all the preceding events to this new scene of dignity and awe? The peals of thunder, sounding in the archangel's trumpet; the blaze of a burning world, and the strong convulsions of expiring nature; the unnumbered myriads of human creatures, starting into instantaneous existence, and thronging the astonished skies; all these seem familiar incidents, compared with the appearance of the incarnate Jehovah. Amazement, more than amazement, is all around. Terror and glory unite in their extremes. From the sight of his majestic eye, from the insupportable splendours of his face, the earth itself, and the very "heavens, flee away," Rev. xx. 11. How then, O how shall the ungodly stand! stand in his angry presence, and draw near to this consuming fire!

Yet draw near they must, and take their trial, their decisive trial, at his righteous bar. Every action comes under examination; for each idle word they must give account. Not so much as a secret thought escapes this exact scrutiny.—How shall the criminals, the impenitent criminals, either conceal their guilt or elude the sentence? They have to do with a sagacity too keen to be deceived, with a power too strong to be resisted, and (O terrible, terrible consideration!) with a severity of most just displeasure, that will never relent, never be entreated more. What ghastly despair lowers on their pale looks! What racking agonies rend their distracted hearts! The bloody axe and the torturing wheel are ease, are down, compared with their prodigious woe. And (O holy God! wonderful in thy doings! fearful in thy judgments!) even this prodigious woe is the gentlest of visitations, compared with that indignation and wrath which are hanging over their guilty heads, which are even now falling on all the sons of rebellion, which will plunge them deep in aggravated and endless destruction.

> And is there a last day? and must there come
> A sure, a fix'd, irrevocable doom?

Surely then, to use the words of a pious prelate,* it should be "the main care of our lives and deaths, what shall give us peace and acceptation before the dreadful tribunal of God. What but righteousness? What righteousness, or whose? Ours, or Christ's? Ours, in the inherent graces wrought in us, in the holy works wrought by us? or Christ's, in his most perfect obedience and meritorious satisfaction, wrought for us, and applied to us? The popish faction is for the former: we protestants are for the latter. God is as direct on our side as his word can make him; every-where blazoning the defects of our own righteousness, every-where extolling the perfect obedience of our Redeemer's."

"Behold!" says the everlasting King, "I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone; a tried stone, a pre-

* Bishop Hall.

cious corner-stone, a sure foundation: He that believeth, shall not make haste," Isa. xxviii. 16. As this text contains so noble a display of our Saviour's consummate ability for his great work; as it is admirably calculated to preserve the mind from distressing fears, and to settle it in a steady tranquillity; you will give me leave to touch it cursorily with my pen, just as I should descant upon it in conversation, was I now sitting in one of your agreeable arbours, and enjoying your more agreeable company.

How beautiful the gradation! how lively the description! and how very important the practical improvement; or, I might say, the inscription, which is engraven on this wonderful stone—"Behold!" Intended to rouse and fix our most attentive regard. The God of heaven speaks. He speaks, and every syllable is balm, every sentence is rich with consolation. If ever, therefore, we have ears to hear, let it be to this Speaker, and on this occasion.

"A stone."—Every thing else is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honour an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of true happiness. And, blessed be the divine goodness! he is, for this purpose, not a stone only, but

"A tried stone."—Tried, in the days of his humanity, by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny. Tried, under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing, to expiate the most enormous guilt—to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions—and save, to the very uttermost, all that come *unto God through him.*

"A corner-stone."—Which not only sustains, but unites the edifice, incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages, and manifold denominations—here, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love—hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy.

"A precious stone."—More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations. —Precious, with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these, and in all respects, greater than Jonah—wiser than Solomon—fairer than all the children of men—chiefest among ten thousand—and to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, "altogether lovely," Cant. v. 16.

"A sure foundation."—Such as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal, to every weight, even to sin, the heaviest load in the world. "The Rock of Ages:" such as never has failed, never will fail, those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer! who roll* all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes, on this immoveable basis; or, as the original words may be rendered, "a foundation! a foundation!" There is a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence, thus understood. It speaks the language of exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek, and find not; it is here! it is here! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.

"Whosoever believeth," though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, "shall not make haste:" but, free from tumultuous and perplexing thoughts, preserved from rash and precipitate steps, he shall possess his soul in patience; knowing the

* *Roll.*—This is the exact sense of the sacred phrase, גל אל יהוה, Psalm xxii. 8.; xxxvii. 5.; Prov. xvi. 3. I am not ignorant, that some people have presumed to censure, and many have been shy of using, this bold and vigorous metaphor: which nevertheless appears to me, of all others, the most just, the most significant, and therefore the most truly beautiful.

sufficiency of those merits, and the fidelity of that grace, on which he has reposed his confidence, shall quietly, and without perturbation, wait for an expected end. And not only amidst the perilous or disastrous changes of life, but even in the day of everlasting judgment, such persons shall stand with boldness. They shall look up to the grand Arbitrator—look round on all the solemnity of his appearance—look forward to the unalterable sentence —and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.

> Such, in that day of terrors, shall be seen
> To face the thunders with a godlike mien.
> The planets drop; their thoughts are fix'd above:
> The centre shakes; their hearts disdain to move.

This portion of Scripture, which I hope will both delight and edify my friend, recalls our attention to the subject of my present letter—to those propitiatory sufferings, and that justifying righteousness, which, imputed to sinners, are the ground of their comfort, and the bulwark of their security. And what say the writers of the New Testament upon this point? they, whose understandings were opened by the "Wonderful Counsellor," to discern the meaning of the ancient oracles; who must therefore be the most competent judges of their true import, and our surest guides in settling their sense. Do they patronize our interpretation of the prophets? do they set their seal to the authenticity of our doctrine?

St Luke, in his ecclesiastical history, has preserved this weighty declaration of the apostles: "We believe, that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they," Acts xv. 11. Here the thing is implied.—St Peter, in the introduction to one of his theological epistles, thus addresses his happy correspondents: "To them that have obtained like precious faith, in the righteousness* of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet.

* The phrase is πιστιν εν δικαιοσυνη. If we retain the common translation, it proves another very momentous truth: that "the righteousness of our God, even of our Saviour Jesus Christ," is the one meri-

i. 1. Here the point is expressly asserted.—With equal clearness is the doctrine delivered by Matthew the evangelist: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," Matt. vi. 33. What can the "kingdom of God" mean? An experience of the power, and an enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel. What are we to understand by "his righteousness?" Surely, the righteousness which is worthy of this grand appellation, and peculiar to that blessed institution.

Would we learn what is the great and distinguishing peculiarity of the gospel? St Paul informs us: "Therein the righteousness of God is revealed, from faith to faith." As this text leads us into the Epistle to the Romans; as this epistle is, for the propriety of its method, as well as for the importance of its doctrine, singularly excellent; it may not be amiss to examine its structure, and inquire into its design.

The apostle writes to a promiscuous people, who had been converted, partly from Judaism, partly from Gentilism. His aim is, to strike at the very root of their former errors respectively—to turn them wholly to the superabundant grace of God, and establish them solely on the all-sufficient merits of Christ.

The Gentiles were, for the most part, grossly ignorant of God, and stupidly negligent of invisible interests. If any among them had a sense of religion, their virtues, they imagined, were meritorious of all that the Deity could bestow. If they fell into sin, sin they supposed might easily be obliterated by repentance, or compensated by a train of sacrifices. A few of their judicious sages taught, that the most probable means of securing the divine favour, was a sincere reformation of life.

The Jews, it is well known, placed a mighty dependence on their affinity to Abraham, and the covenant made with their fathers; on their adherence to the letter of the moral law, and their scrupulous perform-

torious procuring cause of all spiritual blessings; of faith, as well as of *fruition; of grace,* as well as of glory.

ance of ceremonial institutions:—Gentiles and Jews agreeing in this mistake, that they looked for the pardon of guilt, and the attainment of happiness, from some services done, or some qualities acquired, by themselves.

Against these errors the zealous apostle draws his pen. He enters the lists like a true champion of Christ, in the most spirited and heroic manner imaginable: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;" for, however it may be deemed foolishness by the polite Greeks, or prove a stumbling-block to the carnal Jews, "it is the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16.; it is the grand instrument which he has ordained for this blessed purpose, and which he will certainly crown with the desired success. Whence has the gospel this very peculiar power? Because therein a righteousness is revealed—a true and perfect righteousness, which obliterates all guilt, and furnishes a solid title to eternal life. What righteousness is this? The righteousness, not of man, but of God; which was promised by God in the Scriptures, was introduced by God in the person of his Son, and, on account of its consummate excellency, is both acceptable and available in his sight.

This righteousness is "from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17.; held forth, as it were, by a promising God, and apprehended by a believing soul—who first gives a firm assent to the gospel, then cordially accepts its blessings—from a conviction that the doctrine is true, passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own. When this is effected, a foundation is laid for all happiness; a principle is wrought, to produce all holiness.

But why was it requisite that such a righteousness should be provided by God, and revealed in the gospel? Because both Gentile and Jew neither possessed, nor could attain, any righteousness of their own; and this righteousness, though so absolutely necessary for their fallen state, was infinitely remote from all human *apprehensions*. The latter assertion is self-

evident; the former is particularly demonstrated.—First, with regard to the Gentiles: the generality of whom were abandoned to the most scandalous excesses; and they who had escaped the grosser pollutions, fell short in the duties of natural religion. Next, with regard to the Jews: many of whom lived in open violation of the external commandment; and not one of them acted up to the internal purity required by the Mosaic precepts. From which premises this conclusion is deduced—that each of them had transgressed even their own rule of action; that all of them were, on this account, utterly inexcusable: therefore, by the works of the law, whether dictated by reason or delivered by Moses, "no mortal can be justified," Rom. iii. 20. in the sight of God.

Lest any should imagine, that righteousness may be obtained, if not by a conformity to the law of nature, or the law of Moses, yet by an observation of evangelical ordinances, he farther declares, that sinners are justified freely, without any regard to their own endowments, "through the redemption, the complete redemption, of Jesus Christ," Rom. iii. 24.; after such a manner, as may lay them low in humiliation, even while it exalts them to the kingdom of heaven; after such a manner, as may bring life and salvation to their souls, while all the glory reverts to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

In the prosecution of this very momentous subject, our sacred disputant removes an objection which is as common as it is plausible. "Do we make void the law through faith?" Do we render it a vain institution, such as never has been, never will be fulfilled? "God forbid!" This were a flagrant dishonour to the divine Legislator and his holy commandments; such as we would abhor, rather than countenance. On the contrary, "we establish the law,"* Rom. iii. 31.; not only as we receive it for a rule of life, but

* An incontestable proof, that the apostle treats of the moral law.

as we expect no salvation without a proper, without a perfect conformity to its injunctions. How can this be effected? by qualifying its sense, and softening it into an easier system? This were to vacate the law; to deprive it of its honours, and hinder it from attaining the due end, either of obedience or condemnation. No; but we establish the law, by believing in that great Mediator who has obeyed its every precept, sustained its whole penalty, and satisfied all its requirements in their utmost extent.

Farther to corroborate his scheme, he proves it from the renowned examples of Abraham and David. The instance of Abraham is so clear, that it wants no comment: any paraphrase would rather obscure than illustrate it. The other, derived from the testimony of the Psalmist, may admit the commentator's tool; yet not to hammer it into a new form, but only to clear away the rubbish; to rescue it from misrepresentation, and place it in a true light. "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," Rom. iv. 6, 7. Here is imputation asserted—the imputation of righteousness—of righteousness without works; without any respect to, or any co-operation from any kind of human works. It is a blessing vouchsafed to the ungodly; not founded on a freedom from sin, but procuring a remission of its guilt.

Some, I know, have attempted to resolve all the force of this passage into an argument for the sameness of pardon and justification; whereas the apostle undertakes to prove, not that forgiveness and justification are identically the same, but that both are absolutely free. To maintain which position he argues: "This doctrine is as true as it is comfortable. It agrees with the experience, and has received the attestation of David. When he speaks of the blessed and happy man, he describes him, not as an inno-

cent, but guilty person; not as having any claim to the divine favour, on account of deserving performances, or recommending properties; but as owing all his acceptance to that sovereign grace, which forgives iniquities and blots out sin. Such is the case with regard to that evangelical justification which we preach; even as it is in the manner of its vouchsafement perfectly similar to the blessedness celebrated by the Psalmist." The apostle's eye is not so directly upon the nature of the privilege, as upon the freeness with which it is granted: Nor can any infer from the tenor of his reasoning, that to be forgiven is the same as to be justified; only that both are acts of infinitely rich mercy, designed for sinners, promised to sinners, bestowed on sinners; who have nothing, nothing of their own, either to boast or to plead.

In the fifth chapter, from verse the twelfth to the end, the sacred penman points out the cause, and explains the method of justification: Of which this is the sum—That Christ, in pursuance of the covenant of grace, fulfilled all righteousness in the stead of his people: That this righteousness being performed for them, is imputed to them: That by virtue of this gracious imputation they are absolved from guilt and entitled to bliss; as thoroughly absolved, and as fully entitled, as if in their own persons they had undergone the expiatory sufferings and yielded the meritorious obedience. Lest it should seem strange in the opinion of a Jew or a Gentile, to hear of being justified by the righteousness of another, the wary apostle urges a parallel case, recorded in the Jewish revelation, but ratified by universal experience;* namely, our being condemned for the unrighteousness of another. In this respect, he observes, Adam was a type of our Lord, or "a figure of him that was to come," Rom. v. 14. The relation is the same, but the effect is happily reversed. Adam the head of his

* By the pains and death which infants in every nation endure; which are unquestionably punishments, and to which they are doomed by the righteous judgment of God.

posterity; Christ the head of his people. Adam's sin was imputed to all his natural descendants; Christ's righteousness is imputed to all his spiritual offspring. Adam's transgression brought death into the world, and all our woe; Christ's obedience brings life, and all our happiness.* The whole closes with this very obvious and no less weighty inference: "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18.

I do not recollect any other similitude which the apostle so minutely sifts, and so copiously unfolds. He explains it, he applies it, he resumes it, he dwells upon it, and scarcely knows how to desist from it. I am sure you will not blame me if I imitate the sacred author, revert to the subject, and quote another passage from the same paragraph. "Much more shall they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life by one Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 17. Here I am ready to think, the inspired writer puts a difference between the two grand blessings purchased by Emmanuel—remission and righteousness. For who are the persons which receive abundance of grace? They, I apprehend, that, having sinned much, have much forgiven. Who are the persons which receive abundance of the gift of righteousness? They that, having in their own conduct wrought out none which will bear the test of God's impartial scrutiny, have one placed to their account which the all-seeing eye of Heaven approves. However, whether the distinction I have ventured to propose be fanciful or substantial, of this I am persuaded, that the gift of righteousness† must signify a righteous-

* "As the sin of Adam," says Bengelius, "without any concurrence of the sins which we ourselves respectively commit, occasioned our ruin; so the righteousness of Christ, abstracted from all consideration of our personal obedience, procures our recovery."

† I cannot but wonder at the assertion of a late writer, who roundly declares, "That there is not one word in this whole chapter relating to the antecedent obedience of Christ's life, but expressing only his passive

ness not originally their own, but another's; not what they themselves have acquired, but what was fulfilled by their Surety; and is, by an act of heavenly indulgence, consigned over to them. Accordingly it is represented, not as a work, but as a gift; and those who are interested in it are styled, not workers, but receivers.

I should but faintly copy the apostolic example, if I did not once again avail myself of this important topic. Suffer me, therefore, to transcribe one more verse from this admirable chapter. "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous," Rom. v. 19. The "disobedience of one," is the disobedience of Adam, his actual transgression of the divine law. Hereby "many were made sinners;" sinners in such a sense as to become obnoxious unto condemnation and death. All this, I think, is, from the apostle's own words, indisputable. And if we would preserve the propriety of his antithesis, or the force of his reasoning, we must allow, that the obedience of one is the obedience of Christ; his actual and complete performance of the whole law. Hereby "many are made righteous;" righteous in such a sense, as to be released from condemnation, and vested with a title to life eternal. How clear and easy is this meaning! how just and regular this argumentation! What subtilty of evasion must be used, to give a different turn to the instructive text!

This is the most consistent sense in which I can understand Rom. viii. 5. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:" That the righteousness required by the holy, but broken law, might be thoroughly accomplished; accomplished by our pub-

obedience." Must then this group of expressions—δικαιωσις—δικαιωμα—υπακοη—be confined barely to the sufferings of our Lord? To put such a sense upon the words of the apostle, is, according to my apprehension, not to acquiesce in the sacred oracles, but to make them speak our own meaning.

lic Representative, and in our human nature; so as to be deemed, in point of legal estimation, fulfilled for us and by us.* This, I say, is most consistent with the tenor of St Paul's arguing, and with the exact import of his language.—With the tenor of his arguing; for he undertakes to demonstrate the impossibility of our justification by any personal conformity to the law; whereas, if we could satisfy its penalty, and obey its precepts, or, in other words, fulfil its righteousness, this impossibility would cease. —With the exact import of his language; for the original phrase denotes, not a sincere, but a complete obedience; not what we are enabled to perform, but what the law has a right to demand; which, every one must acknowledge, is not fulfilled in any mere man since the fall, but was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, for our good and in our stead. This interpretation preserves the sentences distinct, and makes a very natural introduction for the following clause, where the persons interested in this privilege are described by their fruits, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" implying, that justification and sanctification are, like the ever-corresponding motion of our eyes, inseparable concomitants; and we vainly pretend to the former, if we continue destitute of the latter.

We have produced positive proofs of our doctrine: we have heard an apostle declaring the assured happiness and complete justification of true believers: Let us now observe the same sagacious judge of men and things discovering the danger of those self-justiciaries who reject the Redeemer's righteousness.

He is filled with the darkest apprehensions concerning his brethren the Jews. He is impressed with melancholy presages relating to their eternal state, Rom. ix. 2. What was the cause of this tender solicitude? Had they cast off all religion, and given

* It is remarked by a judicious critic, and very valuable expositor, that the preposition ὑπὲρ sometimes signifies *by* or *for*; and is so translated, Matth. v. 34.; Heb. i. 1. See Dr Guyse's Exposition of the New Testament.

themselves over to gross immoralities? On the contrary, they were worshippers of the true God; and had, in their way, not only a regard, but a zeal for his honour, Rom. x. 2. Wherefore, then, does this compassionate father in Israel feel the same trembling uneasiness for his kinsmen according to the flesh, as Eli felt for the endangered ark? Himself assigns the reason: Because "they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. Not knowing that immaculate holiness, which the perfect nature, and equally perfect law of the most high God require; being wilfully ignorant of that consummate obedience which an incarnate God vouchsafed to perform for the justification of his people; they sedulously, but foolishly, endeavoured to establish their own righteousness; to make it, scanty and decrepit as it was, the basis of their hopes. Thus were they resting their everlasting all on a bottom, not precarious only, but irreparably ruinous. A boundless eternity the fabric! yet they build (wonder, O heavens!) on the foam of the waters! and (which added stubbornness to their folly) in avowed contempt of that strong and sure foundation laid by God's own hand in Zion. For this the good apostle was afflicted with "great heaviness and continual sorrow." For this he made the prophet's pathetic complaint his own; "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might bewail day and night," (Jer. ix. 1.) the incorrigible perverseness of my people! "For my people have committed two evils:" in not thankfully submitting to the righteousness of God, "they have forsaken the fountain of living waters;" in attempting to establish their own righteousness, "they have hewed themselves out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13.

Having shewed their fatal error, he strengthens his representation, by displaying the happy success of the

Gentiles. "What shall we say then?" This, however improbable it may seem, we confidently affirm, "That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness," who had no knowledge of it, and no concern about it; even they "have attained to righteousness. Strange assertion! how is this possible? Doubtless, the righteousness which they attained could not be any personal righteousness. Of this they were totally destitute. Instead of practising moral virtues, or religious duties, they were immersed in sensuality, and abandoned to idolatry. It must therefore be the evangelical, the imputed righteousness, "even that which was wrought by Christ, and is received by faith."

Israel, in the mean time, the nominal Israel, who with great pretensions to sanctity, and many costly oblations, "followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Attained! they have done nothing less. They are fallen vastly short of it; they are pronounced guilty by it; they stand condemned before it.* Wherefore did they so grossly mistake, and so grievously miscarry? Because they forsook the good old way, in which Abraham, David, and their pious ancestors walked. They adopted a new scheme; and would fain have substituted their own, instead of relying on a Saviour's righteousness. They sought for justification, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32. A method which their fathers knew not; which their God ordained not; and which proved, as it always will prove, not only abortive but destructive. At this stone they stumbled; on this rock they split. Let their ruin be a way-mark, and the apostle's observation a lighthouse to my Theron.

* This, I apprehend, is the purport of the apostle's speech, when he tells us, that his countrymen "had not attained unto the law of righteousness." He uses the figure μειωσις, and means more than he expresses: Somewhat like the prophet in the close of this chapter, who assures the believers in Jesus, "They shall not be ashamed," that is, they shall be "encouraged, imboldened, established."

Our zealous writer tries every expedient: He mingles hope with terror. Having pointed out the rock on which the Israelites suffered shipwreck, he directs us to the haven, in which sinners may cast anchor and find safety. He gives us a fine descriptive view of the Christian's complete happiness. He opens (if I may continue the metaphor) a free and ample port for perishing souls; not formed by a neck of land or a ridge of mountains, but by a magnificent chain of spiritual blessings; all proceeding from, and terminating in, that precious corner-stone, Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30.:—"wisdom," to enlighten our ignorant minds; "righteousness,"* to justify our guilty persons; "sanctification,"* to renew our depraved natures; "redemption," to rescue us from all evil, and render us, both in body and soul, perfectly and eternally happy. Let it be remarked, how carefully our inspired writer sets aside all sufficiency, as well as all merit, in man. He represents the whole of our salvation, both in its procurement and application, as a work of freest grace. Christ is, and not we ourselves, the author of this glorious restoration, the cause of this great felicity. He is made all this unto us. How? Not by our own resolution and strength; but of God, by the agency of his mighty power and blessed Spirit. He shews us the all-sufficient fulness of Christ. He brings us by ardent longings to Christ. He implants us into Christ, and makes us partakers of his merits.

In the process of the same epistle, the sacred penman enumerates the constituent parts of that great salvation which the Son of God has procured for ruined sinners. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. "Ye are washed;" cleansed from the filth, and dis-

* "Righteousness and sanctification;" the former imputed, the latter inherent. This preserves a distinction between the noble articles, and assigns to each a grand share in the economy of salvation.

charged from the guilt of all your iniquities. "Ye are sanctified;" delivered from the death of sin, and endued with a living principle of holiness. "Ye are justified;" restored to a state of acceptance with God, and invested with a title to eternal glory. All which inestimable prerogatives are conferred upon the true believer, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" in consideration of his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness. "By the Spirit of our God;" through the efficacy of his operation, revealing Christ, and working faith in the heart.

Some gentlemen have talked of a new remedial law; whereas the apostle declares, "that Christ is the end of the" old, the unalterable, the Mosaic "law, for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. Follow the course of a river, it will constantly lead you to the ocean. Trace the veins of the body, they invariably unite in the heart. Mark likewise the tendency of the law; it no less constantly and invariably conducts you to Christ, as the centre of its views, and the consummation of its demands. The moral law aims at discovering our guilt, and demonstrating our inexpressible need of a Saviour. The ceremonial points him out as suffering in our stead, making reconciliation for iniquity, and purging away every defilement with his blood. They both direct the wretched transgressor to renounce himself, and fly to the Redeemer, who alone has paid that perfect obedience, and brought in that everlasting righteousness, which the sinner wants, and the law exacts; who is therefore the only proper accomplishment of the one, and the only suitable supply for the other.

What is the grand design of the whole Scriptures? St Paul, displaying their sublime origin, and enumerating the gracious purposes they are intended to serve, writes thus: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine," to declare and establish religious truth; "for reproof," to convince of sin, and to refute error; "for *correc-

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. Πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν.

tion," or renovation of the heart, and reformation of the life; "for instruction in righteousness," in that righteousness which could never have been learned from any other book, and in which alone sinful men may appear with comfort before their God.

We have seen the principal scope of the law, and the leading design of the Scriptures; let us add one inquiry more. What is the chief office of the Spirit? If all these coincide, and uniformly terminate in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have a confirmation of its reality and excellence, great as man can desire, I had almost said, great as God can impart. What says our Lord upon this point? "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall convince* the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," John xvi. 8—11. Is it possible for words to be more weighty and comprehensive? Here is a summary of Christian faith and of Christian holiness. Not that superficial holiness which is patched up of devotional forms, and goes no farther than external performances; but that which is vital, and springs from the heart; consists in power, not in mere profession; whose praise, if not of men who are smitten with pompous outsides, is sure to be of God, who distinguishes the things which are excellent.

"He shall convince the world of sin," of original and actual sin, the sin of their nature, as well as the sin of their life; the sin of their best deeds, no less than their criminal commissions and blamable omissions. Above all, of their sinning against the sovereign, the only remedy, by unbelief; "because they believe not on me." He shall convince "of right-

* "He shall convince," seems to be the most proper translation of ἐλέγξει, as it implies the sure success which attends the operation of the divine Spirit. Man may reprove, and no conviction ensue: whereas *that Almighty* Agent not only reproves, but reproves with power; so *as to determine the judgment*, and sway the affections.

eousness;" of the divine Redeemer's righteousness, which the foregoing conviction must render peculiarly welcome; convince them, that it was wrought out in behalf of disobedient and defective mortals; that it is absolutely perfect, and sufficient to justify even the most ungodly. Of all which an incontestable proof is given, by his resurrection from the dead, his triumphant ascension into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of his Father: "Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." He shall convince "of judgment." Those who are humbled under a sense of guilt, and justified through an imputed righteousness, shall be taught by happy experience, that the prince of this world is condemned and dethroned in their hearts; that their souls are rescued from the tyranny of Satan, are made victorious over their corruptions, and restored to the liberty, the glorious liberty, of the children of God.

You wonder, perhaps, that I have not strengthened my cause by any quotation from the epistle to the Galatians. What I design, my dear Theron, is not to accumulate, but to select arguments. However, that I may not disappoint an expectation so reasonable, I proceed to lay before you a very nervous passage from that masterly piece of sacred controversy. Only let me just observe, that the epistle was written to persons who had embraced Christianity, and professed an affiance in Christ; but would fain have joined circumcision, would fain have superadded their own religious duties to the merits of their Saviour, in order to constitute, at least, some part of their justifying righteousness. Against which error, the vigilant and indefatigable assertor of "the truth as it is in Jesus," remonstrates: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law,* but by the faith of

* To express his ardent concern for the truth and purity of the gospel, the works of the law are mentioned no less than three times by the apostle, and as often excluded from the affair of justification. The faith of Christ likewise is thrice inculcated, and as often asserted to be *the only method of becoming* righteous before God.

Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," Gal. ii. 15, 16.

"We, who are Jews by nature," the descendants of Abraham, and God's peculiar people, have the tables of his law, and the ordinances of his worship; we who in point of privileges are greatly superior to the Gentile nations, and have all possible advantages for establishing (if such a thing were practicable) a righteousness of our own; what have we done? "We have believed on Jesus Christ;" we have renounced ourselves; disclaimed whatever is our own, and depended wholly on the righteousness of Christ. For what end? That by this "faith in Christ," which receives his righteousness; pleads his righteousness; and presents nothing but his righteousness before the throne, "we might be justified." What motive has induced us to this practice? A firm persuasion, that by "the works of the law," by sincere obedience, or personal holiness, "no man living has been, and no man living can be, justified before God."

Are you tired, Theron? have I fatigued your attention instead of convincing your judgment? I will not harbour such a suspicion. It is pleasing to converse with those who have travelled into foreign countries, and seen the wonders of creation. We hearken to their narratives with delight. Every new adventure whets our curiosity, rather than palls our appetite. Must it not then afford a more sublime satisfaction to be entertained with the discourses of a person, who had not, indeed, sailed round the world, but made a journey to the third heavens? who had been admitted into the paradise of God, and heard things of infinite importance and unutterable dignity? This was the privilege of that incomparable man, whose observations and discoveries I have been presenting to my friend. And I promise myself he will not complain of weariness, if I enrich my epistle with one or two more of those *glorious truths.*

"God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might," not be put into a capacity of acquiring a righteousness of our own, but "be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. In this text the double imputation of our sin to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to us, is most emphatically taught and most charmingly contrasted. Most emphatically taught: for we are said, not barely to be righteous, but to be made righteousness itself; and not righteousness only, but (which is the utmost that language can reach) the righteousness of God. Most charmingly contrasted: for one cannot but ask, In what manner Christ was made sin? In the very same manner we are made righteousness. Christ knew no actual sin; yet, upon his mediatorial interposition on our behalf, he was treated by divine justice as a sinful person. We likewise are destitute of all legal righteousness, yet, upon our receiving Christ, and believing in his name, we are regarded by the divine Majesty as righteous creatures. This, therefore, cannot, in either case, be intrinsically, but must be, in both instances, imputatively. Gracious, divinely gracious exchange! pregnant with amazing goodness, and rich with inestimable benefits. The incessant triumph of the strong, and sovereign consolation of the weak believer.

Cease your exultation, cries one, and come down from your altitudes. The term used in this verse denotes, not so properly sin, as an offering for sin.—This is a mere supposal, which I may as reasonably deny as another affirm; since the word occurs much more frequently in the former signification than in the latter; and since, by giving it the latter signification in the passage before us, we very much impair, if not totally destroy, the apostle's beautiful antithesis.

However, not to contend, but to allow the remark; I borrow my reply from a brave old champion * for the

* See Dr Fulk's annotation on the place, in that valuable piece of ancient controversy and criticism, "The Examination of the Rhemish Testament." Would the young student be taught to discover the very sinews of Popery, and be enabled to give an effectual blow to that

truths of the gospel: "This text," says he, "invincibly proveth, that we are not justified in God's sight by righteousness inherent in us, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith." After which he adds, what I make my answer to the objection, "That Christ was made sin for us, because he was a sacrifice for sin, we must confess; but therefore was he a sacrifice for sin, because our sin was imputed to him, and punished in him." The poor delinquents under the Mosaic dispensation, who brought their sin-offering to the altar of the Lord, were directed to lay their hand on the devoted beast; signifying, by this usage, the transferring of guilt from the offerer to the sacrifice. Conformably to the import of this ceremony, Christ assumed our demerit; like a true piacular victim, suffered the punishment which we had deserved; and which, without such a commutation, we must have undergone. So that our Lord's being made a sin-offering for us, does by no means invalidate, but very much confirm our doctrine. It necessarily implies the translation of our iniquity to his person, and, on the principles of analogy, must infer the imputation of his righteousness to our souls.

One passage more permit me to transcribe into my paper, and, at the same time, to wish that it may be written on both our hearts; written not with ink and pen, no, nor with the point of a diamond, but with the finger of the living God. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9.

Be pleased to observe, that in this confession of faith, and with reference to the cāse of justification,

complication of errors, I scarce know a treatise better calculated for *the purpose.*

the apostle renounces all those acts of supposed righteousness which were antecedent to his conversion. Nor does he repudiate them only, but all those more excellent services by which he was so eminently distinguished, even after his attachment to Christ, and engagement in the Christian ministry. As though he should say, "The privilege of being a Hebrew by birth; the prerogative of being a Pharisee by profession; together with a behaviour exemplary, and a reputation unblamable; all these, which were once reckoned my highest gain, as soon as I became acquainted with the glorious perfections of Christ, 'I counted* loss for him.' And now, though I have been a disciple many years; have walked in all holy conversation and godliness; have endured for my divine Master's name tribulations above measure; have laboured more abundantly, and more successfully, than all the apostles; yet even these, and all other attainments, of what kind or of what date soever, I count† but loss, for the transcendent excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord. 'Yea doubtless;'‡ it is my deliberate and steadfast resolution; what I have most seriously adopted, and do publicly avow, that specious as all these acquirements may seem, and valuable as they may be in other respects, I reckon them but dung, that I may win Christ.§ They fade into nothing, they dwindle into less than nothing, if set in competition with his matchless obedience; and were they to supersede my application to his merits, or weaken my reliance on his mediation, they would be, not contemptible only, but injurious—irreparably injurious—loss itself."

You will ask, If he rejects all his own righteousness,

* Ηγημαι, "I have counted."

† Ηγημαι relates to the present time, and comprehends present attainments, "I do count."—Not some, or the greatest part, but "all things."

‡ Perhaps αλλα μενουνγε may be translated, "but truly." As if he had said, "But why should I mention any more particulars? In truth, I count all things," &c.

§ Δια Χριστον—δια το υπερεχον—ινα Χριστον κερδησω—plainly imply this comparative or relative sense.

on what are his hopes fixed? On a foundation, extensive as the obedience of the Redeemer's life and death, unshaken as the dignity of his eternal power and Godhead. They are fixed on "the righteousness which is of God;" the righteousness which God the Father, in unsearchable wisdom, provided; and which God the Son, in unutterable goodness, wrought. Do you inquire how he came to be invested with this righteousness? The answer is ready and satisfactory. It was by the application of the divine Spirit, and the instrumentality of faith. Lest any should imagine that this faith might be substituted instead of his own obedience to the law, he puts an apparent difference between the righteousness which justifies, and the faith by which it is received; not the righteousness which consists in, but is "through, the faith of Christ." To shew the great importance of this distinction, how earnestly he insisted upon it as a preacher, how much it tended to his consolation as a Christian, he repeats the sentiment, he reinculcates the doctrine, "the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Will you now, Theron, or shall I, poor unprofitable creatures, presume to rely on any performances or any accomplishments of our own, when that distinguished saint,—a perfect prodigy of gifts, of graces, and of zeal,—indefatigable in labours, unconquerable by afflictions, and of whose usefulness there is neither measure nor end;—when he denies himself in every view, depreciates all, disavows all, and makes mention of nothing but the incomparable righteousness of his "obedient, dying, interceding Saviour?"

What shall I say more? Shall I attempt to play the rhetorician, and borrow the insinuating arts of persuasion? This, after all the cogent testimonies produced, and all the great authorities urged, would be a needless parade. When our pen is a sunbeam, there is but little occasion to dip it in oil.

Instead of such an attempt, give me leave to make a frank and honest confession. I would conceal no*thing from my* friend. He should have a sash to my

breast; throw it up at his pleasure; and see all that passes within.—Though I never had any temptation to that pernicious set of errors, which passes under the character of Socinianism, yet I had many searchings of heart, and much solicitous inquiry, how far we are indebted to Christ's active righteousness. Thoroughly persuaded, that "other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, even Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.; and that "there is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved," Acts iv. 12.; yet, whether we were not to confine our believing regards to a dying Saviour, was matter of considerable doubt. At first, I was inclined to acquiesce in the affirmative. After long consideration and many prayers, my faith fixed upon the whole of Christ's mediatorial undertaking; which begun in his spontaneous submission to the law, was carried on through all his meritorious life, and issued in his atoning death. This is now the basis of my confidence, and the bulwark of my happiness. Hither I fly; here I rest; as the dove, after her wearisome and fruitless rovings, returned to Noah and rested in the ark.

This scheme first recommended itself to my affections, as making the most ample provision for the security and repose of a guilty conscience; which, when alarmed by the accusations of sin, is very apprehensive of its condition; and will not be comforted, till every scruple is satisfied, and all the obstructions to its peace are removed. Thus I reasoned with myself: "Though there is undoubtedly something to be said for the other side of the question, yet this is evidently the safest method. And in an affair of infinite consequence, who would not prefer the safest expedient? Should the righteousness of Jesus Christ be indispensably requisite as a wedding-garment, what will they do, when the great immortal King appears, who have refused to accept it? whereas, should it not prove so absolutely necessary, yet such a dependence can never obstruct our salvation. It can never be charged *upon us as an* article of contumacy or per-

verseness, that we thought too meanly of our own, too magnificently of our Lord's obedience. So that, let the die turn either way, we are exposed to no hazard. This scheme takes in all that the other systems comprehend, and abundantly more. In this I find no defect, no flaw, no shadow of insufficiency. It is somewhat like the perfect cube, which, wherever it may be thrown, or however it may fall, is sure to settle upon its base. Supposing, therefore, the important beam should hang in equilibrium with respect to argument, these circumstances cast into the scale, may very justly be allowed to turn the balance."

Upon a more attentive examination of the subject I perceived, that this is the doctrine of our national church; is enforced by the attestation of our ablest divines; and has been in all ages the consolation of the most eminent saints: That it is the genuine sense of Scripture, and not some inferior or subordinate point, incidentally touched upon by the inspired writers, but the sum and substance of their heavenly message; that which constitutes the vitals of their system, and is the very soul of their religion. On which account, the whole gospel is denominated from it, and styled "the ministration of righteousness." I was farther convinced, that this way of salvation magnifies, beyond compare, the divine law; is no less honourable to all the divine attributes; and exhibits the ever-blessed Mediator in the most illustrious and the most delightful view. All these considerations, under the influence of the eternal Spirit, have determined my judgment, and established my faith. So that, I trust, neither the subtilties of wit, nor the sneers of ridicule, nor any other artifice, shall ever be able to separate me from the grace and righteousness which are in Jesus Christ.

Let me now, by way of conclusion, review that awful subject which introduced the letter. Let me suppose the Judge, who "is at the door," actually come; the great and terrible day, which is hasting forward, *really commenced*.—Hark! the trumpet sounds the

universal summons. The living are struck with a death-like astonishment; the dead start from their silent abodes. See, the whole earth takes fire; the sun is turned into darkness; and the stars fall from their spheres! Behold, the Lord Jesus comes with myriads of his angels! The judgment is set, and the books are opened.

Observe those exemplary Christians, whose sentiments I have been collecting. They renounce themselves, and rely on their glorious Surety. Methinks I hear them say, each as they quit their beds of dust: "I will go forth from the grave in thy strength, O blessed Jesus; and at the decisive tribunal will make mention of thy righteousness only." At the same time, will you, Theron, or shall I, stand forth and declare, before the innumerable multitude of anxious sinners and adoring seraphs, "Let those pusillanimous creatures fly for refuge to their Saviour's righteousness: We will confide in works, in accomplishments of our own. We are the men who have personally kept the divine law, and want no supposititious obedience from another. Let the eye that glances through immensity, and penetrates the recesses of the heart; let that holy and omniscient eye examine our temper, and sift our conduct. We are bold to risk our souls, and all their immortal interests, on the issue of such a scrutiny?"

Perhaps your mind is impressed with this solemn scene, and your thoughts recoil at such daring presumption. If so, it will be proper for me to withdraw, and leave you to your own meditations. At such moments to obtrude on your company, would render me the troublesome and officious, rather than the respectful and affectionate ASPASIO.

LETTER VI.—THERON TO ASPASIO.

DEAR ASPASIO,—THE last evening was one of the finest I ever saw. According to my custom, I made

an excursion into the open fields, and wanted nothing to complete the satisfaction but my friend's company. I could not but observe how much your improving conversation heightened the charms of nature. When religion applied philosophy, every thing was instructive as well as pleasing. Not a breeze swept over the plains, to clear the sky and cool the air, but it tended also to disperse our doubts, and enliven our faith in the supreme all-sufficient Good. Not a cloud tinged the firmament with radiant colours, or amused the sight with romantic shapes, but we beheld a picture of the present world—of its fading acquisitions and fantastic joys—in the mimic forms and the transitory scene. Even the weakest of the insect tribe, that skim the air in sportive silence, addressed us with the strongest incitements, and gave us the loudest calls to be active in our day, and useful in our generation. They cried, at least when you lent them your tongue,

> Such is vain life, an idle flight of days,
> A still delusive round of sickly joys;
> A scene of little cares, and trifling passions,
> If not ennobled by the deeds of virtue.

How often, at the approach of sober eve, have we stole along the cloisters of a sequestered bower, attentive to the tale of some querulous current, that seemed to be struck with horror at the awful gloom, and complained with heavier murmurs, as it passed under the blackening shades, and along the root-obstructed channel! Or else, far from the babbling brook, and softly treading the grassy path, we listened to the nightingale's song; while every gale held its breath, and all the leaves forbore their motion, that they might neither drown nor interupt the melodious wo. From both which pensive strains, you endeavoured to temper and chastise the exuberant gaiety of my spirits. You convinced me, that true joy is a serious thing; is the child of sedate thought, not the spawn of intemperate mirth; nursed, not by the sallies of dissolute merriment, but by the exercise of serene contemplation.

Sometimes, at the gladsome return of morn, we have ascended an airy eminence, and hailed the new-born day; and followed, with our delighted eye, the mazes of some glittering stream. Here, rushing with impetuous fury from the mountain's side, foaming over the rifted rocks, and roaring down the craggy steep; impatient, as it were, to get free from such rugged paths, and mingle with the beauties of the lower vale: There, slackening its headlong career, and smoothing its eddies into an even flow: While, deep embosomed in the verdant mead, it glides through the cherished and smiling herbage; sometimes lost amidst closing willows; sometimes emerging with fresh beauty from the leafy covert; always roving with an air of amorous complacency, as though it would caress the fringed banks and flowery glebe. Reminded by this watery monitor, of that constancy and vigour with which the affections should move towards the great centre of happiness, Christ Jesus; of that determined ardour with which we should break through the entanglements of temptation, and obstacles of the world, in order to reach our everlasting rest; and of the mighty difference between the turbulent, the frothy, the precipitate gratifications of vice, and the calm, the substantial, the permanent delights of religion.

Or else, with eager view, we have surveyed the extensive prospect, and wandered over all the magnificence of things—an endless variety of graceful objects and delightful scenes! each soliciting our chief regard; every one worthy of our whole attention; all conspiring to touch the heart with a mingled transport of wonder, of gratitude, and of joy. So that we have returned from our rural expedition, not as the spendthrift from the gaming-table, cursing his stars, and raving at his ill luck, gulled of his money, and the derided dupe of sharpers; not as the libertine from the house of wantonness, surfeited with the rank debauch, dogged by shame, goaded by remorse, with a thousand recent poisons tingling in his veins. But we returned as ships of commerce from the

golden continent, or the spicy islands, with new accessions of sublime improvement and solid pleasure; with a deeper veneration for the Almighty Creator; with a warmer sense of his unspeakable favours; and with a more inflamed desire "to know him now by faith, and after this life to have the fruition of his glorious Godhead."

Sometimes, with an agreeable relaxation, we have transferred our cares from the welfare of the nation to the flourishing of the farm; and instead of enacting regulations for the civil community, we have planned schemes for the cultivation of our ground and the prosperity of our cattle. Instead of attending to the course of fleets and the destination of armies, we have directed the plough where to rend the grassy turf, or taught the honeysuckle to wind round the arbour, and the jessamine to climb upon the wall. Instead of interposing our friendly offices to reconcile contending kingdoms, we have formed a treaty of coalition between the stranger scion and the adopting tree; and by the remarkable melioration of the ensuing fruit, demonstrated (would contending empires regard the precedent!) what advantages flow from pacific measures and an amicable union. Instead of unravelling the labyrinths of state, and tracing the finesses of foreign courts, we have made ourselves acquainted with the politics of nature, and observed how wonderfully, how mysteriously, that great projectress acts. In this place she rears a vast trunk, and unfolds a multiplicity of branches from one small berry. She qualifies, by her amazing operations, a few contemptible acorns, that were formerly carried in a child's lap, to bear the British thunder round the globe, and secure to our island the sovereignty of the ocean. In another place she produces, from a dry grain, first the green blade, then the turgid ear, afterwards the full grown and ripened corn in the ear, Mark iv. 28.; repaying, with exact punctuality, and with lavish usury, the husbandman's toil and the husbandman's loan; causing, by a most surprising re-

surrection, the death of one seed to be fruitful in the birth of hundreds.

But I forget your caution, Aspasio; forget how kindly you have checked me, when I have been haranguing upon, I know not what, powers and works of nature; whereas it is God who "worketh hitherto," John v. 17.; who to this day exerts, and to the end of time will exert that secret but unremitted energy, which is the life of this majestic system, and the cause of all its stupendous operations. Let this shew you how much I want my guide, my philosopher, and friend. Without his prompting aid, my genius is dull, my reflections are awkward, and my religious improvements jejune; somewhat like the bungling imitations of the tool, compared with the masterly effects of vegetation. However, I will proceed; yet not from any view of informing my Aspasio, but only to draw a bill upon his pen, and lay him under an obligation to enrich me with another letter upon the grand and excellent subject of his last.

Art is dim-sighted in her plans, and defective even in her most elaborate essays. But Nature, or rather nature's sublime Author, is indeed a designer, and "a workman that need not be ashamed," 2 Tim. ii. 15. His eye strikes out ten thousand elegant models; and his touch executes all with inimitable perfection. What an admirable specimen is here of the divine skill, and of the divine goodness! This terraqueous globe is intended not only for a place of habitation, but for a storehouse of conveniencies. If we examine the several apartments of our great abode, if we take a general inventory of our common goods, we shall find the utmost reason to be charmed with the displays, both of nice economy, and of boundless profusion.

Observe the surface of this universal messuage. The ground, coarse as it may seem, and trodden by every foot, is nevertheless the laboratory where the most exquisite operations are performed; the shop, if I *may so speak, where* the finest manufactures are

wrought. Though a multitude of generations have always been accommodated, and though a multitude of nations are daily supplied by its liberalities, it still continues unexhausted—is a resource that never fails, a magazine never to be drained.

The unevenness of the ground, far from being a blemish or a defect, heightens its beauty, and augments its usefulness. Here it is scooped into deep and sheltered vales, almost constantly covered with a spontaneous growth of verdure, which, all tender and succulent, composes an easy couch, and yields the most agreeable fodder for the various tribes of cattle. There it is extended into a wide, open, champaign country, which, annually replenished with the husbandman's seed, shoots into a copious harvest; a harvest, not only of that principal wheat which is the staff of our life and strengthens our heart, but of the "appointed barley," Isa. xxviii. 25. and various other sorts of grain, which yield an excellent food for our animals, and either enable them to dispatch our drudgery, or else fatten their flesh for our tables.

The furrows, obedient to the will of man, vary their produce. They bring forth a crop of tall, flexile, slender plants,* whose thin filmy coat, dried, attenuated, and skilfully manufactured, transforms itself into some of the most necessary accommodations of life, and genteelest embellishments of society. It is wove into ample volumes of cloth, which, fixed to the mast, give wings to our ships, and waft them to the extremities of the ocean. It is twisted into vast lengths of cordage, which add nerves to the crane, and lend sinews to the pulley; or else, adhering to the anchor, they fasten the vessel even on the fluctuating element, and secure its station even amidst driving tempests. It furnishes the duchess with her costly head-dress, and delicately fine ruffles. No less strong than neat, it supplies the ploughman with his coarse frock, and the sailor with his clumsy trowers. Its fibres, artfully arranged by the operations of the loom, cover

* Flax and hemp.

our tables with a graceful elegance, and surround our bodies with a cherishing warmth. On this the painter spreads the colours which enchant the eye; in this the merchant packs the wares which enrich the world.

Yonder the hills, like a grand amphitheatre, arise. Amphitheatre! All the pompous works of Roman magnificence are less than mole-banks, are mere cockle-shells, compared with those majestic elevations of the earth. Some clad with mantling vines; some crowned with towering cedars; some ragged with misshapen rocks, or yawning with subterraneous dens, whose rough and inaccessible crags, whose hideous and gloomy cavities, are not only a continual refuge for the wild goats, but have often proved an asylum to persecuted merit,* and a safeguard to the most valuable lives.

At a greater distance, the mountains lift their frozen brows, or penetrate the clouds with their aspiring peaks. Their frozen brows arrest the roving, and condense the rarefied vapours. Their caverned bowels collect the dripping treasures, and send them abroad in gradual communications by trickling springs; while their steep sides precipitate the watery stores, rolling them on with such a forcible impulse, that they never intermit their unwearied course till they have swept through the most extensive climes, and regained their native seas.

The vineyard swells into a profusion of clusters, some tinged with the deepest purple, and delicately clouded with azure; some clad with a whitish transparent skin, which shews the tempting kernels lodged in luscious nectar. The vine requires a strong reflection of the sunbeams, and a very large proportion of warmth. How commodiously do the hills and mountains minister to this purpose! May we not call those vast declivities, the garden-walls of nature? which,

* To David from Saul's malice; to Elijah from Jezebel's vengeance; to many of the primitive Christians, from the rage of persecuting emperors: "They wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth," Heb. xi. 38.

far more effectually than the most costly glasses, or most artful green-houses, concentrate the solar heat, and complete the maturity of the grape, distending it with a liquor of the finest scent, the most agreeable relish, and the most exalted qualities! such as dissipate sadness, and inspire vivacity; such as make glad the heart of man, and most sweetly prompt both his gratitude and his duty to the munificent Giver. I grieve and I blush for my fellow-creatures, that any should abuse this indulgence of Heaven, that any should turn so valuable a gift of God into an instrument of sin—turn the most exhilarating of cordials into poison, madness, and death.

The kitchen-garden presents us with a new train of benefits. In its blooming ornaments, what unaffected beauty! In its culinary productions, what diversified riches! It ripens a multitude of nutrimental esculents, and almost an equal abundance of medicinal herbs; distributing refreshments to the healthy, and administering remedies to the sick. The orchard, all fair and ruddy, and bowing down beneath its own delicious burden, gives us a fresh demonstration of our Creator's kindness; regales us first with all the delicacies of summer fruits; next, with the more lasting succession of autumnal dainties.

What is nature but a series of wonders, and a fund of delights! That such a variety of fruits, so beautifully coloured, so elegantly shaped, and so charmingly flavoured, should arise from the earth, than which nothing is more insipid, sordid, and despicable! I am struck with pleasing astonishment at the cause of these fine effects, and no less surprised at the manner of bringing them into existence. I take a walk in my garden, or a turn through my orchard, in the month of December: There stand several logs of wood fastened to the ground: They are erect, indeed, and shapely, but without either sense or motion: No human hand will touch them, no human aid will succour them; yet in a little time they are beautified with *blossoms*, they are covered with leaves, and at last

are loaded with mellow treasures, with the downy peach and the polished plum, with the musky apricot and the juicy pear, with the cherry and its coral pendents, glowing through lattices of green;

——and dark
Beneath her ample leaf, the luscious fig.

I have wondered at the structure of my watch; wondered more at the description of the silk-mills; most of all at the account of those prodigious engines invented by Archimedes. But what are all the inventions of all the geometricians and mechanics in the world, compared with these inconceivably nice automata* of nature! These self-operating machines dispatch their business with a punctuality that never mistakes, with a dexterity that cannot be equalled. In spring they clothe themselves with such unstudied, but exquisite finery, as far exceeds the embroidery of the needle, or the labours of the loom. In autumn they present us with such a collation of sweetmeats, and such blandishments of taste, as surpass all that the most critical luxury could prepare, or the most lavish fancy imagine. So that those coarse and senseless logs first decorate the divine creation, then perform the honours of the table.

If, amidst these ordinary productions of the earth, God appears so "great in counsel, and mighty in work," Jer. xxxii. 19. what may we expect to see in the palaces of heaven, in the hierarchies of angels, and in that wonderful Redeemer who is, beyond all other objects, beyond all other manifestations, the "wisdom of God, and the power of God?" 1 Cor. i. 24.

The forest rears myriads of massy bodies, which, though neither gay with blossoms, nor rich with fruit, supply us with timber of various kinds, and of every desirable quality. But who shall cultivate such huge trees, diffused over so vast a space? The toil

* *Automata*, or self-operating machines; not meant to set aside the superintendency of Providence, but only to exclude the co-operation of man.

were endless. See, therefore, the all-wise and ever-gracious ordination of Providence. They are so constituted, that they have no need of the spade and the pruning-knife. Nay, the little cares of man would diminish, rather than augment their dignity and their usefulness. The more they are neglected, the better they thrive, the more wildly grand and magnificent they grow.

When felled by the axe, they are sawed into beams, and sustain the roofs of our houses; they are fashioned into carriages, and serve for the conveyance of the heaviest loads. Their substance so pliant, that they yield to the chisel of the turner, and are smoothed by the plane of the joiner; are wrought into the nicest diminutions of shape, and compose some of the finest branches of household furniture. Their texture so solid, that they form the most important parts of those mighty engines which, adapting themselves to the play of mechanic powers, dispatch more work in a single hour than could otherwise be accomplished in many days. At the same time, their pressure is so light that they float upon the waters, and glide along the surface, almost with as much agility as the finny fry glance through the deep. Thus, while they impart magnificence to architecture, and bestow numberless conveniencies on the family, they constitute the very basis of navigation, and give expedition, give being, to commerce.

Amidst the inaccessible depths of the forests, an habitation is assigned for those ravenous beasts, whose appearance would be frightful, and their neighbourhood dangerous to mankind. Here the sternly majestic lion rouses himself from his den, stalks through the midnight shades, and awes the savage herd with his roar. Here the fiery tiger springs upon his prey, and the gloomy bear trains up her whelps. Here the swift leopard ranges, and the grim wolf prowls, and both in quest of murder and blood. Were these horrid animals to dwell in our fields, what havock would they make? what consternation would they spread?

But they voluntarily bury themselves in the deepest recesses of the desert; while the ox, the horse, and the serviceable quadrupeds, live under our inspection, and keep within our call; profiting us as much by their presence, as the others oblige us by their absence.

If at any time those shaggy monsters make an excursion into the habitable world, it is when man retires to his chamber, and sleeps in security. The sun, which invites other creatures abroad, gives them the signal to retreat. "The sun ariseth, and they get them away, and lay them down in their dens," Psal. civ. 22. Strange! that the orient light, which is so pleasing to us, should strike such terror on them! should, more effectually than a legion of guards, put them all to flight, and clear the country of those formidable enemies!

If we turn our thoughts to the atmosphere, we find a most curious and exquisite apparatus of air, which, because no object of our sight, is seldom observed, and little regarded; yet is a source of innumerable advantages; and all these advantages (which is almost incredible) are fetched from the very jaws of ruin. My meaning may be obscure, therefore I explain myself.

We live plunged, if I may so speak, in an ocean of air, whose pressure, upon a person of moderate size, is equal to the weight of twenty thousand pounds. Tremendous consideration! Should the ceiling of a room, or the roof of a house, fall upon us with half that force, what destructive effects must ensue! Such a force would infallibly drive the breath from our lungs, or break every bone in our bodies. Yet so admirably has the divine wisdom contrived this aerial fluid, and so nicely counterpoised its dreadful power, that we receive not the slightest hurt—we suffer no manner of inconvenience—we even enjoy the load. Instead of being as a mountain on our loins, it is like wings to our feet, or like sinews to our limbs. Is not this common ordination of Providence, thus considered, somewhat like the miracle of the burning bush,

whose tender and combustible substance, though in the midst of flames, was neither consumed nor injured? Exod. iii. 2. Is it not almost as marvellous as the prodigy of the three Hebrew youths, who walked in the fiery furnace without having a hair of their heads singed, or so much as the smell of fire passing on their garments? Dan. iii. 27. Surely we have reason to say unto God, "O! how terrible," yet how beneficent, "art thou in thy works!"

The air, though too weak to support our flight, is a thoroughfare for innumerable wings. Here the whole commonwealth of birds take up their abode. Here they lodge and expatiate, beyond the reach of their adversaries. Were they to run upon the earth, they would be exposed to ten thousand dangers, without proper strength to resist them, or sufficient speed to escape them; whereas, by mounting the skies, and "lifting themselves up on high, they are secure from peril; they scorn the horse and his rider," Job xxxix. 18. Some of them perching upon the boughs, others soaring amidst the firmament, entertain us with their notes; which are musical and agreeable when heard at this convenient distance, but would be noisy and importunate if brought nearer to our ears. Here many of those feathered families reside, which yield us a delicious treat; yet give us no trouble, put us to no expense, and, till the moment we want them, are wholly out of our way.

The air, commissioned by its all-bountiful Author, charges itself with the administration of several offices, which are perfectly obliging, and no less serviceable to mankind. Co-operating with our lungs, it ventilates the blood, and refines our fluids. It qualifies and attempers the vital warmth, promotes and exalts the animal secretions. Many days we might live, or even whole months, without the light of the sun, or the glimmering of a star; whereas, if we are deprived, only for a few minutes, of this aerial support, we sicken, we faint, we die. The same universal nurse has a considerable share in cherishing the several

tribes of plants. It helps to transfuse vegetable vigour into the trunk of the oak, and a blooming gaiety into the spread of the rose.

The air undertakes to convey to our nostrils the extremely subtile effluvia which transpire from odoriferous bodies. Those detached particles are so imperceptibly small, that they would elude the most careful hand, or escape the nicest eye. But this trusty depositary receives and escorts the invisible vagrants, without losing so much as a single atom: entertaining us, by this means, with the delightful sensations which arise from the fragrance of flowers; and admonishing us, by the transmission of offensive smells, to withdraw from an unwholesome situation, or beware of any pernicious food.

The air, by its undulating motion, conducts to our ear all the diversities of sound, and thereby discharges the duty of a most seasonable and faithful monitor. As I walk across the streets of London, with my eye engaged on other objects, a dray, perhaps, with all its load, is driving down directly upon me; or, as I ride along the road, musing and unapprehensive, a chariot and six is whirling on, with a rapid career, at the heels of my horse. The air, like a vigilant friend in pain for my welfare, immediately takes the alarm; and, while the danger is at a considerable distance, dispatches a courier to advertise me of the approaching mischief. It even thunders in my ear; and, with a clamorous but kind importunity, urges to be upon my guard, and provide for my safety.

The air wafts to our sense the modulations of music, and the more agreeable entertainments of refined conversation. When Myrtilla strikes the silver strings, and teaches the willing harpsichord to warble with her Creator's praise; when her sacred sonata warms the heart with devotion, and wings our desire to heaven: —when Cleora tunes her song, or the nightingale imitates her enchanting voice; when she heightens every melodious note with her adored Redeemer's name, and *so smooths her charming* tones, so breathes her rap-

turous soul, "that God's own ear listens delighted:" —when wisdom takes its seat on Mitio's tongue, and flows, in perspicuous periods and instructive truths, amidst the chosen circle of his acquaintance:—when benevolence, associated with persuasion, dwell on Nicander's lips, and plead the cause of injured innocence or oppressed virtue:—when goodness, leagued with happiness, accompany Eusebius into the pulpit, and reclaim the libertine from the slavery of his vices, disengage the infidel from the fascination of his prejudices, and so affectionately, so pathetically invite the whole audience to partake the unequalled joys of pure religion:—In all these cases, the air distributes every musical variation with the utmost exactness, and delivers the speaker's message with the most punctual fidelity. Whereas, without this internuncio, all would be sullen and unmeaning silence: we should lose both the pleasure and the profit; neither be charmed with the harmonious, nor improved by the articulate accents.

The breezes of the air, when vague and unconfined, are so very gentle, that they sport with the most inoffensive wantonness amidst Ophelia's locks, and scarce disadjust a single curl. But, when collected and applied by the contrivance of man, they act with such prodigious force, as is sufficient to whirl round the hugest wheels, though clogged with the most encumbering loads: They make the ponderous millstones move as swiftly as the dancer's heel, and the massy beams play as nimbly as the musician's finger.

If we climb, in speculation, the higher regions, we find an endless succession of clouds, fed by evaporations from the ocean. The clouds themselves are a kind of ocean, suspended in the air with amazing skill. They travel in detached parties, and in the quality of itinerant cisterns, round all the terrestrial globe. They fructify, by proper communications of moisture, the spacious pastures of the wealthy, and gladden, with no less liberal showers, the cottager's little spot. *Nay, so condescending* is the benignity of their great

Proprietor, that they "satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and cause, even in the most uncultivated wilds, the bud of the tender herb to spring forth," Job xxxviii. 27.; that the natives of the lonely desert, those savage herds which know no master's stall, may nevertheless experience the care, and rejoice in the bounty of an all-supporting Parent.

How wonderful! that the water, which is much denser and far heavier than the air, should rise into it, make its way through it, and take a station in the very uppermost regions of it! This, one would imagine, were almost as impossible as for the rivers to run back to their source. Yet Providence has contrived a way to render it not only practicable, but matter of continual occurrence.

How wonderful! that pendent lakes should be diffused, or fluent mountains heaped over our heads, and both sustained in the thinnest parts of the atmosphere! We little think of that surprising expedient which, without conduits of stone or vessels of brass, keeps such loads of water in a buoyant state. Job and Elihu considered this, and were struck with holy admiration. "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?" how such ponderous bodies are made to hang with an even poise, and hover like the lightest down? "These are the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge," Job xxxvii. 16. "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud," though nothing is more loose and fluid, becomes, by his almighty order, strong and tenacious as casks of iron: it "is not rent," Job xxvi. 8. under all the weight.

When the sluices are opened, and the waters descend, we might reasonably suspect that they should burst forth in cataracts, or pour out themselves in torrents. Whereas, instead of such a disorderly and precipitate effusion, which would be infinitely pernicious, they coalesce into globules, and are dispensed in gentle showers. They are often attenuated into the smallness of a hair; they spread themselves, as if they were strained *through the* orifices of the finest watering-*pot, and form those* "small drops of rain, which the

clouds distil upon man abundantly," Job xxxvi. 28. Thus, instead of drowning the earth, and sweeping away its fruits, they cherish universal nature; and, in conformity to the practice of their great Master, distribute their humid stores to men, to animals, and vegetables, "as they are able to bear them," Mark iv. 33.

Besides the reservoirs of water, here are cantoned various parties of winds, mild or fierce, gentle or boisterous, furnished with breezy wings, to fan the glowing firmament, and diffuse refreshment on a fainting world; or else fitted to act as an universal besom, and, by sweeping the chambers of the atmosphere, to preserve the fine aerial fluid free from feculencies. Without this wholesome agency of the winds, the air would stagnate, become putrid, and surround us, in the literal sense of the words, "with darkness that might be felt," Exod. x. 21. London, Paris, and all the great cities in the world, instead of being the seats of elegance, would degenerate into sinks of corruption.

At sea, the winds swell the mariner's sails, and speed his course along the watery way; speed it far more effectually than a thousand rowers, bending to their strokes, and tugging at the oar. By land, they perform the office of an immense seedman, and scatter abroad the reproductive principles of a multitude of plants, which, though the staff of life to many animals, are too small for the management, or too mean for the attention of man. "He bringeth the winds out of his treasuries," Psalm cxxxv. 7. is a very just observation, whether it relate to God's absolute and uncontrollable dominion over this most potent meteor, or to its welcome and salutary influence on all the face of nature.

Here are lightnings stationed. Though dormant at present, they are in act to spring, and launch the livid flame, whenever their piercing flash is necessary to destroy the sulphureous vapours, or dislodge any other noxious matter which might be prejudicial to the delicate temperature of the ether, and obscure *its more than* crystalline transparency.

Above all is situate a radiant and majestic orb, which enlightens the tracts, cheers the inhabitants, and colours all the productions of this habitable globe. While the air, by a singular address in managing the rays, amplifies their usefulness, its reflecting power* augments that heat which is the life of nature, its refracting power prolongs that splendour which is the beauty of the creation. These emanations of light, though formed of inactive matter, yet (astonishing apparatus of almighty wisdom!) are refined almost to the subtilty of spirit, and are scarce inferior even to thought in speed. By which means they spread themselves, with a kind of instantaneous swiftness, through the circumference of a whole hemisphere; and though they fill, wherever they pervade, yet they straiten no place, embarrass no one, encumber nothing.

These give the diamond its brilliancy, and the velvet its gloss: to these, the cheerful eye is obliged for its lively sparkle, and the modest cheek for its rosy blush. These, attending the judicious touches of the pencil, bid the drapery flow and the embodied figure arise; bid the countenance wear the calm serenity of thought, or be agitated with the wild transports of passion.—Without this circumstance of colour, we should want all the entertainments of vision, and be at a loss to distinguish one thing from another. We should hesitate to pronounce, and must take a little journey to determine, whether yonder enclosure contains a piece of

* The air is a curious cover, which, without oppressing the inhabitants of the earth with any perceivable weight, confines, reflects, and thereby increases the vivifying heat of the sun. The air increases this kindly heat, much in the same manner as our garments by day, or bedclothes by night, give additional warmth to our bodies. Whereas, when the aerial vestment grows thin, or, to speak more philosophically, when the air becomes less in quantity, and more attenuated in quality, the solar warmth is very sensibly diminished. Travellers on the lofty mountains of America sometimes experience, to their terrible cost, the truth of this observation. Though the clime, at the foot of those prodigious hills, is hot and sultry, yet, on their summits, the cold rages with such excessive severity, that it is no unusual calamity for the horse and his rider to be frozen to death. We have, therefore, great reason to bless the supreme Disposer of things, for placing us in the commodious concavity, or rather, under the cherishing wings of an atmosphere,

pasturage, or a plot of arable land. We should question, and could not very expeditiously resolve, whether the next person we meet be a soldier in his regimentals, or a swain in his holiday-suit; a bride in her ornaments, or a widow in her weeds. But colour, like a particular livery, characterizes the class to which every individual belongs. It is the label which indicates, upon the first inspection, its respective quality. It is the ticket which guides our choice, and directs our hand.*

We have cursorily surveyed the upper rooms of our great habitation, and taken a turn along the ground-floor; if we descend into the subterraneous lodgments, the cellars of the stately structure, we shall there also find the most exquisite contrivance acting in concert with the most profuse goodness. Here are various minerals, of sovereign efficacy in medicine; which rectify the vitiated blood, and quicken the languid spirits; which often rekindle the fading bloom in the virgin's complexion, and reinvigorate the enfeebled arm of manhood. Here are beds fraught with metals of the richest value. From hence come the golden treasures, from hence the silver ores, which are the very life of traffic, and circulate through the body politic as the vital fluid through the animal frame; which, in the refining hand of charity, are feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind, and make the widow's heart sing for joy. Here are mines, which yield a metal of meaner aspect, but of a firmer cohesion, and of superior usefulness—a metal, that constitutes almost all the implements with which art executes her various designs. Without the assistance of iron, trade would be reduced to the lowest ebb; commerce would feel

* This, I believe, suggests the true sense of those noble metaphors used by the divine speaker: "It is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment:" It, the earth and all its productions, receive from the rising sun both colour and beauty; just as the soft clay and the melting wax receive an elegant impression from the seal.—"They (the morning and the day-spring, mentioned in a preceding verse) stand as a garment;" they act the part of a magnificent and universal clothing, give all visible objects their comely aspect and graceful distinctions; *Job* xxxviii. 14.

her wings clipped; and every species of mechanic skill either utterly fail, or be miserably baffled. Without the assistance of iron, it would be almost impossible to rear the steady mast, to display the daring canvass, or drop the faithful anchor. Destitute of this ever-needful commodity, we should have no plough to furrow the soil, no shuttle to traverse the loom, scarce any ornament for polite, or any utensil for ordinary life.

Here is an inexhaustible fund of combustible materials, which supply the whole nation with fuel. These present their ministrations in the kitchen, and yielding themselves as aliment to the flame, render our food both palatable and healthy. These offer their service at the forge, and with their piercing heat mollify the most stubborn bars, till they become pliant to the stroke of the hammer. The coals pour themselves likewise into the glass-houses. They rage, amidst those astonishing furnaces, with irresistible but useful fierceness. They liquefy even the obdurate flint, and make the most rigid substances far more ductile than the softest clay or the melting wax; make them obsequious, not only to the lightest touch, but to the impressions of our very breath.

By this means we are furnished, and from the coarsest ingredients, with the most curious, beautiful, and serviceable manufacture in the world—a manufacture, which transmits the light and warmth of the sun into our houses, yet excludes the annoyance of the rains, and the violence of the winds; which gives new eyes to decrepit age, and vastly more enlarged views to philosophy and science; which leads up the astronomer's discernment even to the satellites of Saturn, and carries down the naturalist's observation as far as the animalcule race; bringing near what is immensely remote, and making visible what, to our unassisted sight, would be absolutely imperceptible.

We have also, when the sun withdraws his shining, an expedient to supply his place. We can create an artificial day in our rooms, and prolong our studies, *or pursue our business,* under its cheering influence.

With beaming tapers and ruddy fires, we chase the darkness, and mitigate the cold; we cherish conversation, and cultivate the social spirit. We render those very intervals of time some of the most delightful portions of our life, which otherwise would be a joyless and unimproving void.

These obscure caverns are the birth-place of the most sparkling gems; which, when nicely polished, and prodigal of their lustre, stand candidates for a place on the royal crown, or a seat on the virtuous fair one's breast; and, I will not with our men of gallantry say, emulate the living brilliancy of her eyes, but serve as a foil to set off the loveliness and excellency of her accomplished mind, and amiable conversation; "whose price," according to the unerring estimate of inspiration, is superior to sapphires, "is far above rubies," Prov. xxxi. 10.

Here are quarries stocked with stones, inferior in beauty to the jeweller's ware, but much more eminently beneficial; which, when properly ranged, and cemented with a tenacious mortar, form the convenient abodes of peace, and build the strongest fortifications of war; defending us from the inclemencies of the weather, and the more formidable assaults of our enemies. These constitute the arches of the bridge which convey the traveller, with perfect security, over the deep and rapid stream. These strengthen the arms, the stupendous arms, of the mole; which stretch themselves far into the ocean, break the impetuosity of the surge, and screen the bark from tempestuous seas. These stony treasures are comparatively soft while they continue in the bowels of the earth, but acquire an increasing hardness when exposed to the open air. Was this remarkable peculiarity reversed, what difficulties would attend the labours of the mason? His materials could not be extracted from their bed, nor fashioned for his purpose, without infinite toil. Were his work completed, it could not long withstand the fury of the elements; but, insensibly mouldering, or incessantly

decaying, would elude the expectations of the owner; perhaps might prove an immature grave, instead of a durable dwelling.

Here are various assortments or vast layers of clay; which, however contemptible in its appearance, is abundantly more advantageous than the rocks of diamond, or the veins of gold. This is moulded, with great expedition and ease, into vessels of any shape, and of almost every size. Some so delicately fine, that they compose the most elegant and ornamental furniture for the tea-table of a princess: Others so remarkably cheap, that they are ranged on the shelves, and minister at the meals, of the poorest peasant. All so perfectly neat, that no liquid takes the least taint, nor the nicest palate any disgust, from their cleanly services.

A multiplicity of other valuable stores are locked up, by Providence, in those ample vaults. The key of all is committed to the management of industry; with free permission to produce each particular species, as necessity shall demand, or prudence direct.

Which shall we most admire—the bountiful heart, the liberal hand, or the all-discerning eye of our great Creator? how observable and admirable is his precaution, in removing these useful but cumbrous wares from the superficies, and stowing them, in proper repositories, beneath the ground! Were they scattered over the surface of the soil, the earth would be embarrassed with the enormous load; our roads would be blocked up, and scarce any portion left free for the operations of husbandry. Were they buried extremely deep, or sunk to the centre of the globe, it would cost us immense pains to procure them; or rather, they would be quite inaccessible. Were they uniformly spread into a pavement for nature, the trees could not strike their roots, nor the herbs shoot their blades, but universal sterility must ensue. Whereas, by their present disposition, they furnish us with a magazine of metallic, without causing any diminution of our vegetable, treasures. Fossils of

every splendid and serviceable kind enrich the bowels, while bloom and verdure embellish the face of the earth.

So judicious is the arrangement of this grand edifice; so beneficent the destination of its whole furniture! * in which all is regulated with consummate skill, and touched into the highest perfection! All most exactly adapted to the various intentions of Providence, and the manifold exigencies of mankind; to supply every want we can feel, and gratify every wish we can form.

Insomuch that the whole system affords a favourite and exalted topic of praise, even to those distinguished beings who "stand on the sea of glass, and have the harps of God in their hands." They lift their voice and sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty," Rev. xv. 3. And is there not reason, my Aspasio would say, infinite reason for us to join this triumphant choir, and add gratitude to our wonder, love to our hallelujahs; since all these things are to us, not merely objects of contemplation, but sources of accommodation; not only a majestic spectacle, bright with the display of our Creator's wisdom, but an inestimable gift, rich with the emanations of his goodness? The earth hath he set before the inhabitants of glory, "but the earth hath he given to the children of men," Psal. cxv. 16. Having given us ourselves, given us a world; has he not a right, a most unquestionable and unrivalled right, to make that tender demand, "My son, give me thy heart?" Prov. xxiii. 26.

Shall I add another passage, which, viewed with any but the last paragraph, will be like the head of gold, eminent and conspicuous, on feet of iron and clay? It is taken from the finest philosophical oration that ever was made. I never read it but with a glow of delight, and with impressions of awe. It is,

* No notice is taken of the ocean, in this little rent-roll of nature's wealth; because a distinct sketch is given of that grand receptacle, and its principal services, in Letter IX.

in short, inimitably spirited and sublime. You think, perhaps, I act an impolitic part in being so lavish of my praise; and that the quotation must suffer by such an aggrandizing introduction. But I am under no apprehensions of this kind: Forbear to be delighted, if you can; cease to admire, if you can; when you hear Omniscience itself declaring, that on the sight of this universal fabric emerging out of nothing, "the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," Job xxxviii. 7. The system was so graceful, so magnificent, and in all respects so exquisitely finished, that the most exalted intelligences were charmed, were transported. They knew not how to express themselves on the great occasion, but in shouts of exultation and songs of praise. Is it possible for imagination to conceive an encomium so just, so high, so beautifully noble?—I am sure, after so much delicacy and majesty of sentiment, any thing of mine must be intolerably flat; unless you will except this one profession, that I am, with the most cordial sincerity, my dear Aspasio, inviolably yours, THERON.

LETTER VII.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

MY DEAR THERON,—IF you write with such a view, and from such a motive, as are mentioned in your last, expect no more free-will offerings from my pen. In this one instance I shall think it my duty to be covetous. I shall act the miser out of principle; and hardly persuade myself to part with a single line, till it is become an undeniable debt. I must turn your own artifice on yourself, and lay you under a necessity of obliging, entertaining, and edifying me by your correspondence.

For, give me leave to assure you, that I am always delighted, and always improved by your epistles. They shew me a multitude of beauties in the creation

which I should not otherwise have discerned. They point out the infinite power, the unsearchable wisdom, and the charmingly rich goodness of the glorious Maker. Such a philosophy turns all nature into a school of instruction, and is an excellent handmaid to true religion. It makes every object a step, better than a golden step, to raise both our knowledge and our affections to the adorable and immortal Cause of all.

While I am roving heedlessly along, your remarks often interpose, like some intelligent faithful monitor who claps his hand upon my breast, and says, "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God," Job xxxvii. 14. Willingly I obey the admonition: the Christian may, with peculiar complacency, consider this grand magazine of wonders, this copious storehouse of blessings, and conscious of an interest in Jesus, has a right to call them all "his own," 1 Cor. iii. 2. He may look round upon present things, look forward unto future things, and, trusting in his Saviour's merit, may confidently say,—"Not one only, but both these worlds are mine. By virtue of my Redeemer's righteousness, I possess the necessary accommodations of this life; and on the same unshaken footing, I stand entitled to the inconceivable felicity of a better."

Surely, then, it will be as pleasing an employ, and as important a search, to examine the validity of our title to future things, as to estimate the value of our present possessions. You have executed the one, let me attempt the other. You have surveyed material nature. It appears to be a fair and stately mansion, void of all defect; and, for the purposes which it is intended to answer, completely finished. Is not our Saviour's obedience, the provision made for indigent and guilty souls, equally rich, and equally perfect? Since this is everlasting and immutable; since the other is transient and perishable; doubtless we may argue with the judicious apostle; If "that which is to be done away," which will soon be consigned over

to dissolution, "is glorious; much more that which remaineth," whose blessed effects continue to eternal ages, "is glorious," 2 Cor. iii. 11.

We are every one "as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6. Our very nature is contaminated. Even sanctification, though it destroys the reigning, does not wholly supersede the polluting power of iniquity; so that, whatever graces we exercise, whatever duties we perform, (like the rays of light transmitted through coloured glass, or like generous wine streaming from a defiled cask), they receive some improper tinge, or contract some debasing taint. But Christ was entirely free from this innate contagion. He had no erroneous apprehensions in his mind, no corrupt bias upon his will, nor any irregular concupiscence in his affections.

Being thus perfectly undefiled, "he did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 22. All his thoughts were innocent, all his words were irreproachable, and every action blameless. The most accomplished among the children of men, when surprised in some unguarded moment, or assaulted on some weak side, have been betrayed into error, or hurried into sin. Even Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, and Aaron, the saint of the Lord, warped to idolatrous practices. They were like some stagnating lake, in which, the dregs being subsided, the waters appear clean; but when stirred by temptation, or agitated by affliction, the sediment rises, and the pool is discoloured. Whereas Christ may be compared to a fountain that is all transparency, and pure to the very bottom; which, however shaken, however disturbed, is nothing but fluid crystal, permanently and invariably clear.

It was a small thing for the blessed Jesus to have no depraved propensity: he was born in a state of consummate rectitude, and adorned with all the beauties of holiness. "Holiness to the Lord" was inscribed, not on the mitre, but on the heart of our great High-priest: Therefore he is styled, by the angelic

harbinger of his birth, "That Holy Thing," Luke *i.* 35.* In the prophecy of Zechariah, the dignity of our Redeemer's nature, and the perfection of his obedience, are displayed by the similitude of a stone, (Zech. iii. 9.) adorned with exquisite engraving, wrought not by Bezaleel or Aholiab, though divinely inspired artists, but by the finger of Jehovah himself; and more highly finished than it is possible for human skill to equal, or human thought to conceive.

The whole tenor of our Lord's conduct was a living exemplification of piety and morality, in their most extensive branches and most amiable forms. Saints of the highest attainments have fallen short of the glory of God; have been far from reaching the exalted standard of his precepts: But Christ failed in no point, came short in no degree. We formerly observed the great sublimity and vast extent of the divine law; from whence appears the extreme difficulty, nay the utter impossibility, of our justification on account of any duties performed by ourselves. How should we rejoice then to contemplate the vicarious righteousness of our condescending and adorable Surety! As the mercy-seat was exactly commensurate to the dimensions of the ark, so did our Lord's obedience most fully quadrate with all and every demand of the divine law. It flowed from those best of principles—supreme love to God, and unfeigned affection to mankind.

From these two capital sources, let us trace our Lord's obedience through some little part of its illustrious progress. His delight in God was conspicuous, even from his early years. The sacred solemnities of the sanctuary were more engaging to his youthful mind, than all the entertainments of a festival. When he entered upon his ministry, whole nights were not too long for his copious devotions. The lonely retirements of the desert, as affording opportunity for undisturbed communion with God, were more desir-

* Which is spoken in contradistinction to the state of all other *births*, and implies the universal prevalence of original corruption, this *one instance* only excepted.

able to Christ than the applauses of an admiring world.

So ceaseless and transcendent was his love to God, that he never sought any separate pleasure of his own, but always did those things which were pleasing in his Father's sight. His own will was entirely absorbed in the will of the Most High, and "it was his meat and drink," refreshing and delightful as the richest food, or as royal dainties, "to finish the work that was given him to do," John iv. 34.

So entirely devoted to the honour of God, that a zeal for his house, and for the purity of his ordinances, is represented by the evangelical historian as "eating him up," John ii. 17. Like a heavenly flame glowing in his breast, it sometimes fired him with a graceful indignation, sometimes melted him into godly sorrow, and, by exerting itself in a variety of vigorous efforts, consumed his vital spirits.

So active and unremitted was the obedience of the blessed Jesus, that the sun did not enter upon his race with a more constant assiduity, nor dispatch his business with greater expedition; and sure I am, that radiant luminary never dispensed beams half so bright, or a thousandth part so beneficial. Short was his span, but how grand and extensive were his services! So grand, that they bring more glory to God than all the administrations of Providence, and all the phenomena of nature. So extensive, that they spread, in their gracious efficacy, to the ends of the earth, and to the closing period of time. Nay, they will diffuse their blessed influence even to the celestial world, and have no other limits of their duration than the ages of eternity.

Most affectionately concerned for the welfare of mankind, he spent his strength, not barely in relieving them when his aid was implored, but in seeking the afflicted, and offering his assistance. With great fatigue, John iv. 6. he travelled to remote cities, and with no less condescension he visited the meanest villages,—that all might have the benefit and comfort

of his presence. Though multitudes of miserable objects were brought to him from every quarter, yet he was pleased even to prevent the wishes of the distressed, and "went about doing good."

He gave sight, and all the agreeable scenes of nature, to the blind; health, and all the choice comforts of life, to the diseased. He expelled malevolent raging demons, and restored, what is more precious than the light of the body, or the vigour of the constitution, the calm possession of the intellectual faculties. What greatly surpassed all the preceding blessings, he released the wretched soul from the dominion of darkness and from the tyranny of sin. He made his followers partakers of a divine nature, and prepared them for a state of never-ending bliss.

Such priceless treasures of wisdom and beneficence flowed from his tongue, and were poured from his hands! How different these triumphs of mercy from the trophies erected by wild ambition in the bloody field? If heathens celebrated those mighty butchers who made cities their slaughter-house, made half the globe their shambles, and measured their merit by the devastations they spread; how should Christians admire this heavenly benefactor, who rose upon a wretched world "with healing under his wings!" who distributed far and near the unspeakably rich gifts of knowledge and holiness, of temporal happiness and eternal joy!

Nor were these righteous acts his strange work, but his repeated, his hourly, his almost incessant employ. Sometimes we hear him preaching in the temple, or publishing his glad tidings in the synagogues. Sometimes we see him teaching in private houses, or bringing forth the good things of his gospel on the deck of a ship. At other times he takes a mountain for his pulpit; the heavens are his sounding-board; and "all that have ears to hear" are invited to be his audience. Does he lay aside his solemn office, it is only to carry on the same design in a more condescending and familiar manner. If he meets with the Pharisees,

he discovers their errors and reproves their vices; he confutes their objections, and (in case they are not absolutely inaccessible to wise counsel) rectifies their mistakes. If he vouchsafes to be present at a feast, he furnishes the richest, incomparably the richest, part of the treat. "Honey and milk are under his tongue," Cant. iv. 11. He inculcates lowliness of mind on the vain, Luke xiv. 8.; he recommends disinterested charity to the selfish, Luke xiv. 12.; and promises pardon to the weeping penitent, Luke vii. 48. Is he retired from other company, and surrounded only by his chosen attendants? His conversation is a sermon. Whether he sit in the inner-chamber, or travel on the public road, or walk through the cornfields, he is still prosecuting his great work, training up his disciples for their sacred function, and imparting to them what they may communicate to others. Is he retired from all company? Even then he does not discontinue his labours of love, but adds the fervent intercessions of the night to the charitable toils of the day. Yes; when all but himself lay sunk in soft repose, this advocate for a guilty world was engaged in an exercise of benevolence, which, though secret and unobserved as the falling dews, was far more beneficial to our best interests than those pearly drops to the languishing herbs.

Most charming and unparalleled benignity! He forgot his daily food, neglected his necessary rest, to spend and be spent for the salvation of mankind. Neither the hardships of continual self-denial, nor the calumnies of envenomed tongues, could divert him from pursuing this favourite business. He sought none of your honours, coveted none of your rewards, O ye children of men! What he sought, what he coveted, was to wear out his life in your service, and lay it down for your ransom. This was all his desire, and this, indeed, he desired earnestly. He longed, (beneficent, blessed Being!) he longed for the fatal hour. He severely rebuked one of his disciples who would have dissuaded him from going as a volunteer

to the cross. He was even straitened,* under a kind of holy uneasiness, till the dreadful work was accomplished; till he was baptized with the baptism of his sufferings, bathed in blood, and plunged in death.

By this most meritorious obedience and death, what did he not deserve? what did he not procure? He procured those inestimable blessings, the pardon of sin and reconciliation with God; procured them (O love unmerited and unmeasurable!) for prodigals, for traitors, for rebels! To this it is owing that we, who were enemies against God, may call the King of heaven our Father, may have free access to him in all our difficulties, and may hope to reign with him in everlasting glory.

Was ever goodness like this goodness?† were ever blessings comparable to these blessings, or purchased with such a price? Hide, hide your diminished heads, ye little transitory donations of silver and gold. The riches of a thousand mines, bestowed to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, are the most contemptible trifles, if mentioned with the charity of the teaching, the healing, the bleeding Jesus! Kingdoms given away in alms, if viewed with this infinitely noble beneficence, would make just the same figure as a spark from the summer-hearth under the potent and boundless blaze of noon. This is indeed "love that passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 19.

Amidst all these miracles of power and of love, (any one of which would have entitled him to universal admiration and everlasting honour), how humble was our Saviour! O humility—virtue dear to the most high God, and peculiarly amiable in men—never didst thou appear in so charming a dress, or so striking a light!

* Luke xii. 50. The original word *συνεχομαι* seems to express the condition of a person wedged in on every side by a tumultuous throng of people.

† Codrus, it is true, devoted himself to death for the Athenians; and Curtius threw himself into the yawning gulf for the preservation of the Romans. But these died being mere creatures, and guilty *creatures; whereas* the dying Jesus was perfectly innocent, and *supremely glorious.*

At his birth, not accommodated with a magnificent palace, but lodged in a stable, and laid in a manger. As he advanced in years, not attended with a royal equipage, or supplied from a royal revenue, but labouring with his own hands, and earning his bread by the sweat of his brow. When he entered upon his ministerial office, not the least ostentatious parade appeared in the performance of all his wonderful works. So far, so very far from affecting the acclamations of the populace, that he often imposed silence on those unspeakably indebted lips which were ready to overflow with praise, and would fain have been the trumpets of his fame.

Though a voice from heaven proclaimed him the beloved of his almighty Father, he disdained not to own the ignoble character of the carpenter's son, Matt. xiii. 55. Though Prince of the kings of the earth, he condescended to wash the feet of mean fishermen and vile sinners, John xiii. 14. Though proprietor and lord of the whole world, he was content to be more destitute than the fowls of the air, or the foxes of the desert, Matt. viii. 20.; more destitute (astonishing abasement!) than the most insignificant and most hated animals.

Grandeur, we find, is apt to beget expectations of superior regard; consequently gives a keener edge to every affront, and renders the mind more tenderly sensible of every disrespect. But our Lord's meekness was as great as his dignity; and that throughout a series of such insufferable provocations, as were equalled by nothing but the sweetness of his forgiving grace.

When rudely affronted, he calmly bore, and kindly overlooked the insult. When contradicted by petulant and presumptuous sinners, he endured, with the utmost serenity of temper, their unreasonable cavils and their obstinate perverseness. When his invitations, his most endearing invitations, were ungratefully and stubbornly rejected, instead of remitting, he renewed them; and, with still warmer affection,

importuned his hearers not to forsake their own mercies, not to forego their own felicity. When all the winning arts of persuasion were ineffectual, he added his tears to his slighted entreaties, and lamented as a brother when scornfully repulsed as a teacher.

Though his disciples slept, stupidly slept, when his bitter cries pierced the clouds, and were enough to awaken the very stones into compassion, did their divine but slighted Master resent the unkindness? Did he refuse to admit an excuse for their neglect? yea, he made their excuse, and that the most tender and gracious imaginable: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matth. xxvi. 41. When his enemies had nailed him to the cross, as the basest slave and most flagitious malefactor; when they were glutting their malice with his torments and blood, and spared not to revile him even in his last expiring agonies; far, very far from being exasperated, this Hero of heaven repaid all their contempt and barbarity with the most fervent and effectual supplications in their behalf: "Father, forgive them," was his prayer; "for they know not what they do," was his plea; Luke xxiii. 34.

Nor was his resignation less exemplary than his meekness. He went out to meet afflictions, when they came in his Father's name, and commissioned from his Father's hand. He gave, without the least reluctance, his back to the smiters, "and hid not his face from shame and spitting." Though his soul, his very soul, was penetrated with the keenest sensations of anguish, yet no impatient thought discomposed his mind, no murmuring word forced its way from his lips. "Father, not my will, but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. was his language, when the sorrows of death compassed him, and pains inexpressibly severer than the pains of dissolution, came upon him. "When they gaped upon him with their mouth, and smote him upon the cheek reproachfully: When his face was foul with spitting, and on his eyelids *was the shadow* of death: When God delivered him

to the ungodly, and turned him over into the hands of the wicked: Yea, when the Almighty set him for the mark of his arrows, and brake him with breach upon breach: When the weapons of his wrath cleft his very reins asunder, and poured his gall upon the earth:"*—Amidst all this exquisite distress, he sinned not by the least irregular perturbation; but bowed his head, and dutifully kissed the divine rod, and cordially blessed his very murderers.

Thus did the whole choir of active and passive virtues abound and shine in our Lord; abound with the richest variety, and shine with the highest lustre, infinitely surpassing that curious assemblage of costly gems which studded the Aaronic breast-plate, Exod. xxviii. 17,—20. and, as far as earthly things can represent heavenly, typified the splendour and perfection of our Redeemer's righteousness.

In all this, he acted and suffered as God's righteous servant, and as his people's righteous surety. By all this, he fulfilled every jot and tittle of the divine law; nay, he more than fulfilled, he magnified it. He gave it (if I may apply the most beautiful allusion that ever was used, to the most momentous subject that ever was discussed) "good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," Luke vi. 38.

He defied the most vigilant of his enemies to convince him of sin. A more malignant, a far more sagacious adversary than the Scribes and Pharisees, could detect no blemish in our Lord Jesus. "The prince of this world," that infernal tyrant who had deceived and enslaved all the nations of the earth, "came and found nothing in him," John xiv. 30.; not the least corruption in his nature, not the least defect in his obedience.

* These tragical images are borrowed from the book of Job, who was an eminent type of a suffering Saviour; and though they are the very eloquence of woe, they do not exaggerate, they cannot express, that inconceivable anguish, which wrung a bloody sweat from our blessed Master's body, and forced from his lips that melancholy exclamation—"My soul is sorrowful—exceeding sorrowful—sorrowful even unto death." See Job xvi.

"He hath done all things well," Mark vii. 37. was the general acclamation of mankind; or, as the words may be rendered, "he hath done all things finely and gracefully," (καλως), with every circumstance that can constitute the propriety and dignity, the utility and beauty of action.

"I have glorified thee on earth," John xvii. 4. was his own profession before the most high God. I have glorified thee in all that I acted, in all that I uttered, in all that I suffered. I have displayed the magnificence of thy majesty, the riches of thy grace, and the honour of all thy attributes. Insomuch, that "whoso seeth me, seeth the Father," John xii. 45.: whoever is properly acquainted with my person and my work of redemption, sees the invisible and knows the incomprehensible Deity; sees his venerable, his amiable, his adorable perfections, in the clearest mirror, and in the brightest light.

God also, who is the supreme standard, and unerring Judge of excellency, bore his testimony to our blessed Mediator. He spoke it once, yea twice, and with a voice from heaven. In the constitution of the material world, when it came forth from the Creator's hand, Omniscience itself could discern no flaw. Neither could Justice itself, upon the strictest inquiry, discover any failure in the obedience of our Surety. As, therefore, it was said concerning the works of creation, "They are all very good," Gen. i. 31. so it was said concerning our Saviour, and by the same Almighty Majesty, "In him I am well pleased," Matth. iii. 17.

You took notice, and very justly, how much the productions of nature exceed and eclipse the attempts of human skill. We are pleased with the performances of the painter; but do they equal the native blush of the rose, or the artless glow of a pea-blossom? We are charmed with a fine piece of enamelling; but is it fit to be compared with the natural polish of a thousand shells which are formed in the ocean, or a thousand seeds which spring from the earth? We admire the virtues of the ancient saints, men "that were

honoured in their generation, and the glory of their times," Eccl'us. xlv. 7. We admire the meekness of Moses, and the magnanimity of Elijah; the exalted piety of Isaiah, and the enlarged wisdom of Daniel; the active spirit of Joshua, and the passive graces of Jeremiah. But what proportion, put them all together —what proportion do they all bear to his obedience "who is gone into heaven, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him?" 1 Pet. iii. 22. " who is called the Holy One and the Just," Acts iii. 14., not only by way of emphasis, but by way of exclusion; because no person is worthy of the character, no duties deserve to be mentioned, when Christ and his merits are under consideration.

If then we talk of merit, what merit must there be in such immaculate sanctity of soul, and such exemplary holiness of conduct; such ardent zeal for God, and such compassionate good-will to men; such consummate worthiness and extensive usefulness; such as were utterly unknown before, have been absolutely unequalled since, and never will, nor can be paralleled throughout all ages!—O my Theron! what is the drop of a bucket to the unfathomable waves of the ocean? What is a grain of sand to the unmeasurable dimensions of the universe? What is an hour or a moment to the endless revolutions of eternity? Such are all human endowments and all human attainments, compared with his righteousness who is "fairer than the children of men," Psal. xlv. 2.; " the chiefest among ten thousand," Cant. v. 10.; and who receiveth not the Spirit by measure," John iii. 34.

Think not that what I have written is the language of rant. It is a paraphrase, though, I must confess, but a scanty paraphrase, on David's practice and David's faith. " My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day, for I know not the numbers thereof," Psal. lxxi. 15. The glorious righteousness of Christ, and the great salvation obtained thereby, he declares, shall be the chosen, the principal subject of his discourse. And not on

a Sabbath only, but on every day of the week, of the year, of his life. And not barely at the stated returns of solemn devotion, but in every social interview, and "all the day long." Why will he thus dwell, perpetually and invariably dwell, on this darling theme? Because "he knew no end thereof." It is impossible to measure the value, or exhaust the fulness of these blessings. The righteousness is unspeakable, the salvation is everlasting. To compute the duration of the one, numbers fail; to describe the excellency of the other, words are at a loss.

And is this righteousness designed for us? Is this to be our wedding-dress, this our beautiful array, when we enter the regions of eternity? Unspeakable privilege! Is this what God has provided to supply, more than supply, our loss in Adam? Boundless benignity! Shall we be treated by the Judge of the world as if we had performed all this unsinning and perfect obedience? Well might the prophet cry out, like one lost in astonishment, "How great is his goodness!" Is not your heart enamoured, my dear Theron, with a view of this incomprehensibly rich grace? What so excellent, what so comfortable, what so desirable, as this gift of a Saviour's righteousness? Though delineated by this feeble pen, methinks it has dignity and glory enough to captivate our hearts and fire our affections; fire them with ardent and inextinguishable desires after a personal interest and propriety in it. O, may the eternal Spirit reveal our Redeemer's righteousness, in all its heavenly beauty and divine lustre! Then, I am sure, we shall esteem it above every thing; we shall regard it as the "one thing needful;" we shall count all things, in comparison of it, worthless as chaff and empty as the wind.

To an immortal and fallen soul every thing else is empty as the wind; but here sinners may "suck and be satisfied with this breast of consolation;" yea, thousands and thousands of millions may "milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of its glory," Isa. *lxvi. 11.* Here we shall find the doctrine of super-

erogation no longer a chimera, but a delightful reality. Here indeed is an immense surplusage, an inexhaustible fund of merit, sufficient to enrich a whole world of indigent and miserable creatures; sufficient to make their cup run over with a superabundant fulness of peace and joy, so long as time shall last, and when time shall be no more. For, to use the apostle's weighty argument, "If, by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 17. If, one offence, committed by one mere man, made all his posterity chargeable with guilt, and liable to death; how much more shall the manifold instances of our divine Redeemer's obedience; of his long, uninterrupted, consummate righteousness;—how much more shall they absolve all his people from condemnation and punishment, and entitle them to the honours and joys of immortality!

Which will appear in a clearer light, if, to the perfection of his obedience, we add the majesty of his person. A proper subject this for some future letter. —In the mean time, let me desire my friend, the friend of my bosom, to contemplate our Lord Jesus under that lovely and august character, "Glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. And, for my part, I will not cease to pray, that a sense of this supereminently grand and precious righteousness may be written on my Theron's heart. On those living tables may it be like figures cut on a rock of solid marble, or inscribed on the bark of a growing tree; be lasting in its duration as the former, and spreading in its influence as the latter. It will then be a sure proof, that his name is written in the book of life; and it shall then be a pleasing pattern for the affection, the gratitude, and the friendship of his ASPASIO.

P. S.—You give a most astonishing account of the pressure of the atmosphere. Astonishing indeed! that we should be continually surrounded, continually

overwhelmed with such a tremendous load, and not be crushed to death; no, nor be sensible of the least weight. This, I think, may serve to represent the state of a sinner unawakened from carnal security. Loads, more than mountainous loads of guilt, are upon his soul, and he perceives not the burden. For this reason, he is under no apprehensions of the vengeance and fiery indignation which he deserves: he has no superlative esteem for the atonement and merits of the Redeemer, which alone can deliver him from the wrath to come. But if once his conscience feels, what his lips perhaps have often repeated, "We do earnestly repent us of these our misdoings, the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable;" then how will he prize such a text, "The Lord laid on Christ the iniquity of us all!" How will he long for an interest in the Lamb of God, "which taketh away the sin of the world!" Then that Jesus who has "finished the transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness," will be all his salvation, and all his desire.

Letter VIII.—Aspasio to Theron.

Dear Theron,—I have just been reading that exquisitely fine piece of sacred history, the life of Joseph: A history filled with surprising incidents and unexpected revolutions; adorned with the most heroic instances of triumphant virtue, both amidst the allurements of temptation and under the pressures of affliction; animated with such tender and pathetic, such melting and alarming touches of natural eloquence, as every reader must feel, and every true critic will admire.

When I came to that remarkable injunction with which the generous viceroy dismissed his brethren, "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt,"

Gen. xlv. 13.;—I paused—I pondered—I was struck. Certainly this was enjoined, not by way of ostentation, but on account of the pleasure which he knew it would yield the good old patriarch. Was it some kind prompting angel, or the voice of gratitude and devotion, that whispered in my ear, "Should not the children of men likewise tell one another of all the glory,* which their Redeemer possesses in heaven and on earth? Will not this afford them the sublimest pleasure here, and be a source of the most refined satisfaction for ever and ever?"

Though I had almost determined to write no more, till you could make a demand upon the foot of value received, willingly I recede from my intended resolution, and obey this pleasing hint. "But who can declare the noble acts of the Lord Jesus Christ, or shew forth all his praise?"—However, if I may but lisp out his adorable name, and present my friend with a glimpse, or a broken view of his divine perfections, even this will be desirable and delightful; far more desirable and delightful, than to behold Rome in its magnificence, St Paul in the pulpit, or King Solomon on his throne.†

Let me take the lark for my pattern; which, as I was lately returning from an evening ramble, attracted my observation. Warbling her Creator's praise, she mounted in the serene sky. Still she warbled, and still she mounted, as though she meant to carry her tribute of harmony unto the very gates of heaven. Having reached at last her highest elevation, and perceiving herself at an immense distance from the starry mansions, she dropped on a sudden to the earth, and discontinued at once both to sing and to soar.

* To see the glory of Christ, is the grand blessing which our Lord solicits and demands for his disciples, in his last solemn intercession, John xvii. 24. It is that which will complete the blessedness of heaven, and fill its inhabitants with joy unspeakable and glorious. Surely, then, we should endeavour to anticipate, in some degree, that celestial bliss; and habituate our souls to this sacred exercise, which will be our business and our reward to endless ages.

† These, if I remember right, are the three things which St. Augustine declared, would, of all others, most eminently gratify his curiosity.

Now the morning appears, and is awakening the world, our little songster retunes her throat, and re-exerts her wings. As I have endeavoured, very imperfectly endeavoured, to strike out a shadowy draught of our Lord's complete obedience; I would, though unequal to the task, once more resume my pen, and attempt—nothing like a display, but only a faint sketch of his essential dignity.

First let me observe, that for some time past we have been visited with the most uncomfortable weather, dewless nights and sultry days. The firmament was more like a glowing furnace than the region of refreshing rain. The earth lay parched with thirst, and chapped with heat. The meadows were drained of their humidity, and all the flowers hung their fading heads. The streams, which used to flow parallel with the verdant margin, abandoned their banks, and sunk diminished and discoloured to the bottom of their oozy channels. Nature in general seemed to be resigning the "robe of beauty for the garment of heaviness." Drought was in all our borders, and famine we feared was not far behind. Though clouds of dust obscured the air, tarnished the hedges, and almost smothered the traveller, yet not one cloud of fleecy white appeared, to variegate the blue expanse, or give us hopes of a reviving shower.

It reminded me of that awful threatening denounced by Moses on a wicked people: "The heaven, that is over thy head, shall be brass, and the earth, that is under thee, shall be iron," Deut. xxviii. 23. It made me apprehensive of that terrible state which the prophet so emphatically describes: "The field is wasted, and the land mourneth. The seed is rotten under the clods, and the harvest perisheth. The garners are laid desolate, and the barns are broken down. The new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth, and all the trees of the field are withered. How do the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate: Because the rivers *of waters are* dried up, and the fire hath devoured the

pastures of the wilderness," Joel i. 10. &c. But, blessed be the divine Providence, our fears are vanished, and a most joyful change has taken place. The Lord hath "sent a gracious rain upon his inheritance, and refreshed it when it was weary," Psalm lxviii. 9.

Yesterday in the afternoon, the wind, shifting to the south, roused the dormant clouds, and brought some of those agreeable strangers on its wings. At first they came sailing in small, and thin, and scattered parties. Anon, the flying squadrons advanced in larger detachments, more closely wedged, and more deeply laden; till at last, the great rendezvous completed, they formed into a body of such depth, and extended their wings with such a sweep, as darkened the sun, and overspread the whole hemisphere.

Just at the close of day, the gales which escorted the spongy treasures retired, and consigned their charge to the disposal of a profound calm. Not a breeze shook the most tremulous leaf: Not a curl ruffled the smooth expansive lake: All things were still, as in attentive expectation. The earth seemed to gasp after the hovering moisture. Nature, with her suppliant tribes, in expressive pleading silence, solicited the falling fruitfulness, nor pleaded long, nor solicited in vain.

The showers, gentle, soft, and balmy, descend. The vessels of heaven unload their precious freight, and enrich the penurious glebe. Through all the night, the liquid sweetness, incomparably more beneficial than trickling silver, distils; shedding herbs, and fruits, and flowers.—Now the sun, mild and refulgent, issues through the portals of the east. Pleased, as it were, to have emerged from the late aggravated darkness, he looks abroad with peculiar gaiety and the most engaging splendors. He looks through the disburdened air, and finds a gladdened world, that wants nothing but his all-cheering beams to render its satisfaction complete.

> The glory comes!—Hail to thy rising ray,
> Great lamp of light, and second source of day!

Who robe the world, each nipping gale remove,
Treat every sense, and beam creating love.—KIRKPATRICK.

At his auspicious approach, the freshened mountains lift their heads, and smile. The garden opens its aromatic stores, and breathes, as from a fuming altar, balm to the smell, and incense to the skies. The little hills, crowned with springing plenty, clap their hands on every side. The moistened plains, and irriguous valleys, "laugh and sing; while their waters, lately exhausted, again "are made deep, and their rivers run like oil," Ezek. xxxii. 14.

The whole earth, saturated with the bounty of heaven, and flushed with humid life, wears a thousand marks of gratitude and complacency. Washed by the copious rain, how bright and vivid is the universal verdure! The green carpet below, may almost vie with the blue canopy above. The forest, and every tree, burnish their colours, and array themselves in their finest apparel; which, as on a day of general festivity, is delicately decked with gems—gems of unsullied lustre, and of genial moisture. From every pasture, and from all the grove, the voice of pleasure and of melody resounds; while the officious zephyrs waft the floating harmony, blended with native perfumes—gently waft them to the senses, and touch the very soul with transport.

Could there be a more brilliant appearance, or more exuberant demonstrations of joy, even to celebrate the anniversary of nature's birth? With what admirable propriety has the Psalmist compared yonder orient sun, in all his sparkling grandeur, to a young exulting "bridegroom," Psal. xix. 5.; who comes forth, with every heightened ornament, from his chamber, to shew himself in the most distinguished period of his life, and to receive the blessing which consummates his happiness!

This most charming and equally majestic scene recalls to my memory that fine description of the Messiah, extant in the last lovely strains of the Israelitish

swan: *—He shall be welcome and salutary "as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth," to chase the malignant shades, and pour day through the reviving world. He shall be as the light of a morning that is most serenely fair, without either storms to disturb, or clouds to obscure the glorious, the delightful dawn. Yea, his appearance shall be "more beautiful," and his influence "more beneficial, † than the clear shining" of that grand luminary, after a night of settled gloom, and showers of incessant rain; when his beams shed animating warmth, and vital lustre, on the tender grass impearled with dews, and on all the green treasures of the teeming earth.

As we have already contemplated the blessed Jesus under the amiable character of the Just One, the foregoing passage of Scripture represents him to our faith in the more majestic quality of the Lord of Glory; or rather, unites the two grand peculiarities which render him unparalleled in his personal, and all-sufficient in his mediatorial capacity.

Great, unspeakably great and glorious, would our Saviour appear, if we had no other manifestations of his excellency than those which preceded his mysterious incarnation. In the ancient Scriptures, he stands characterized as the supreme object of God's ineffable complacency; vested with a glory prior to the birth of time, or the existence of things; even "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," John xvii. 5. He is every-where exhibited as the ultimate desire of all nations, the sole hope of all the ends of the earth, the seed of inestimable and universal importance, in whom all people, nations, and languages, should be blessed. In those

* *Israelitish swan.*—In allusion to those well known lines of the poet,
"Multa Dircæum levat aura cygnum."
And not without a reference to the popular notion, that the swan sings the most melodious notes in its last moments. "Fuit hæc facundi senis quasi cygnea vox."—TULLY.

† "More beautiful, more beneficial than the clear shining," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.—Thus we have ventured to translate, or rather to paraphrase, the words מנגה.

royal, or rather divine acts and monuments, he is publicly recognized as the Ruler of God's people; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation. And how august, how venerable, is this sovereign! since it was the highest honour of the most eminent saints, and renowned monarchs,* to act as his harbingers. The splendour of the temple, the richness of its ornaments, and the solemnity of its services, were the ensigns of his grandeur—were his sacred regalia, intended to usher him into the world with becoming state.

Every inspired prophet was his herald; deputed to blazon his perfections, or foretell his coming. Let us hear one speaking the sentiments of all:—"God the Saviour came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paron. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise," Hab. iii. Thunders sounded his trumpet, and lightnings waved his banners. "Before him went the pestilence," for the destruction of his enemies; but, for the deliverance of Israel, "he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation. The mountains saw him, and they trembled; the everlasting hills, and they bowed their heads. The abyss uttered her voice," and acknowledged his sovereignty through her deepest caverns; "the towering surges lifted up their hands," and remained in a suspended posture while his people passed through the opening lines. Indeed, both depth, and height, and every creature, have paid him homage, and done him service. And shall not we, my dear Theron, "submit to his righteousness?" Submit! Shall we not embrace it; rely on it; and, with joyful hearts, with triumphant tongues, say, "There is none, there is nothing like it!" 1 Sam. xxi. 9.

Does not all mankind agree to estimate the merit of the practice according to the dignity of the person? If a neighbour of inferior rank visit some poor

* Moses, for instance, and Joshua, David, and Solomon, were types, strongly marked types, of our great Lawgiver and Deliverer, of our *divine* Ruler and Preacher.

afflicted wretch in a coarse garret, and on a tattered bed, it is no very extraordinary favour; but if a lady of the first distinction, or a nobleman of the highest order, perform the same office, it is a much more remarkable, a much more admired instance of self-denying charity. On the foot of this calculation, to what a supereminent height will the worthiness of our Lord's obedience rise? It will rise, like some magnificent edifice, whose basis rests upon the centre, whose dimensions fill the hemisphere, and whose turrets glitter in the sky: or rather, it will extend itself to immensity; where length, and breadth, and all dimensions are lost. Especially, if we consider the names he bears, and the honours he receives; the works he has done, and those mightier works he is appointed to do.

The names he bears.—The title by which Jesus of Nazareth is distinguished in the heavenly world; the name written on his vesture, and on his thigh, is "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 16. The description which the incomprehensible Jehovah gives of the Surety for sinful men, runs in this exalted strain: "The Man that is my fellow,"* Zech. xiii. 7.; which the apostle explains in that memorable and majestic clause: "He thought it no robbery to be equal with God,"† Phil. ii. 6. The Holy Ghost, speaking, by the prophet Isaiah, of the virgin's son, enumerates several grand distinctions, both of his person and his office. He styles the child that should be born, "the Wonderful Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace,"

* מועתו "Contribulis vel coequalis," my fellow, or my equal. The original expression occurs no where but in this verse of Zechariah, and in the book of Leviticus. In one text it is explained by brother, or partaker of the same nature. In every other place, I believe it will be found to signify, not barely a neighbour, but an equal; one who stands upon the same level with regard to the claims of equity, and the common rights of life. In either sense, it militates strongly for the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

† Some writers, I am aware, have endeavoured to interpret away this evidence of our Lord's divine nature; but I think with great injury to the context, and no less violence to the phrase.

Isa. ix. 6. The same inspired writer, though eloquent above all orators, and more sublime than the loftiest poet, cries out in rapturous astonishment, "Who can declare his generation?" Isa. liii. 8. What pencil can portray, what language can express, his matchless excellencies? And may we not with equal propriety demand, Who can declare the meritorious perfection of his righteousness? It is precious beyond comparison; beyond imagination precious.

The honours which our Lord receives are proportioned to the illustrious characters which he sustains. John the Baptist, than whom a greater prophet or a better judge was not born of woman, professes himself unworthy "to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes," Mark i. 7.; unworthy, though a burning and shining light in his generation, to perform the meanest service to this Prince of heaven. Stephen, who leads the van in the noble army of Christian martyrs, beheld such a representation of his crucified Master's glory, as enabled him to exult with divine delight, even amidst the furious assaults of his persecutors, and under the violent blows of his murderers, Acts vii. 56. Assured that Jesus has all power in heaven and earth, by an act of the most solemn worship, he commits his departing soul, that most important of all trusts, to his Redeemer's hand, Acts vii. 59. Nor by the first martyr alone, but in all churches of the saints, and in every age of Christianity, has the Lord Jesus been addressed as the constant object of his people's adoration, and acknowledged as the ever-faithful depositary of their eternal interests.

When Isaiah beheld a visionary manifestation of Christ,* the first-born sons of light were waiting around him in postures of dutiful submission. These celestial beings, whose very feet are too bright for mortals to view, veil their faces before his infinitely superior effulgence. The seraphs, who are all zeal and all love, celebrate his perfections, and cry one to another, "The whole earth is full of his glory."

* Isa. vi. 1, 2, &c. compared with John xii. 41.

And is not heaven also filled with his glory? Does not heaven likewise resound with his praise? The beloved disciple, in a vision no less clear, and far more magnificent, beholds the Lamb that was slain, standing in the midst of a resplendent throne, most beautifully adorned with a circling rainbow, and terribly dignified by the blaze of lightnings and the sound of thunders. Before this august throne, and at the disposal of the once slaughtered Saviour, are "seven lamps of burning fire," expressive of the divine Spirit, in all the variety of his miraculous gifts and sanctifying graces, Rev. iv. 5. Four-and-twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, with crowns on their heads, and the harps of God in their hands, fall prostrate in deepest homage before the Lamb. They strike the golden strings, and sing that sublime eucharistic hymn, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us, unto our God, kings and priests," Rev. v. 9, 10.

Behold the hierarchies of angels: they are in number ten thousand times ten thousand.—Hark! they raise their voice, and awaken all the powers of harmony. Who is the subject, and what is the burden of their song? "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing!" Nor these alone, but every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, join the immense chorus. They cry, in loud responsive strains of melody and devotion, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!" Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

This, you observe, is the devout acknowledgment, not only of the cherubim, the seraphim, and the spirits of just men made perfect, but of every creature. The sun, the moon, and the stars, which garnish the

heavens;—beasts and creeping things, mountains and hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, which replenish the earth;—metals and minerals, gems and fossils, the subterraneous riches of nature, or things which are under the earth;—even all those objects which my Theron lately contemplated, do, in their way, magnify the Lord Jesus. They bear witness to his power, as their Creator; they are subservient to his interests, as our Mediator; and in this manner they glorify his sacred name.

Under such views of the blessed Redeemer, enlarged and elevated even to astonishment, is it possible to overrate the worth of his mediatorial obedience? Is it possible to lay too much stress on his expiatory sacrifice, or ascribe too much efficacy to his vicarious righteousness?

To the honours which he receives, let us add the works which he has done. By these, in the days of his flesh, were displayed the greatness of his glory, and the might of his majesty.

"Behold!" says the almighty Father, "my servant"—he who condescends to become my servant in the matchless work of redemption—"shall deal prudently;" shall conduct himself with all the dignity and all the sanctity of wisdom. In consequence of which "he shall be exalted, be extolled, and be very high," Isa. lii. 13. The paraphrase of the Jewish commentators on this beautiful climax is, though inadequate, not contemptible. "The Messiah," they say, "shall be higher than Abraham, more illustrious than Moses, and exalted above the angels of light, even above the prime ministers* of heaven." What follows, is an attempt to render this exposition somewhat less defective.

Here, could you open my chamber-door, and peep upon your friend, you would find him in the same attitude, and under the same perplexity, which were formerly observed in Phocion. Sitting one day,

* *Prime ministers;* this is almost a literal translation of their words, מלאכי השרת.

amidst an assembly of the people, and preparing to make a public oration, he appeared uncommonly thoughtful. Being asked the reason, "I am considering," said he, "how I may shorten what I shall have occasion to speak."—The compass of my subject would demand many volumes; whereas the limits of my letter will allow but a few paragraphs.

Our Lord gave sight to the blind. He poured day upon those hopeless and benighted eyes which had never been visited with the least dawning ray.—The dumb, at his command, found a ready tongue, and burst into songs of praise.—The deaf were all ear, and listened to the joyful sound of salvation.—The lame, lame from their very birth, threw aside their crutches, and full of transport and exultation leaped like the bounding roe.*—He restored floridity and beauty to the flesh emaciated by consuming sickness, or incrusted with a loathsome leprosy. All manner of diseases, though blended with the earliest seeds of life, and rivetted in the constitution by a long inveterate predominancy—diseases that baffled the skill of the physician, and mocked the force of medicine—these he cured, not by tedious applications, but in the twinkling of an eye; not by costly prescriptions, or painful operations, but by a word from his mouth or a touch from his hand; nay, by the fringe of his garment, or the bare act of his will.

Any one of these miracles had been enough to endear the character, and eternize the memory of another person: But they were common things, matters of daily occurrence with our divine Master. The years of his public ministry were an unintermitted series of such healing wonders; or if any intermission took place, it was only to make way for more invaluable miracles of spiritual beneficence.

Behold him exercising his dominion over the vege-

* We have the finest representation of this event given us by the inspired historian, Acts iii. 8. "And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple; walking, and leaping, and praising God."

table creation. A fig-tree, adorned with the most promising spread of leaves, but unproductive of the expected fruit, withers away at his rebuke. It is not only stripped of its verdant honours, but dried up from the very roots, Mark xi. 20. and perishes for ever: A fearful, yet significant intimation of that final ruin which will overtake the specious hypocrite, who, while lavish in outward profession, is destitute of inward piety.

His eye pierced through the whole world of waters, discerned the fish that had just swallowed a piece of silver coin, and guided its course to Peter's hook.* It is true, when the gatherers of the sacred tax came to collect his share for the reparation of the temple, he had not a sufficiency of money to satisfy so small a demand;† yet he takes occasion, from this most abject poverty, to manifest the immensity of his riches. He makes the great deep his revenue, and bids the scaly nations bring him their tribute. Never was such indigence associated with such magnificence! And never, never let us forget, that the indigence was ours, the magnificence all his own.

The waters themselves, it may be said, are far more unmanageable than their inhabitants. Who can control that outrageous element, which has destroyed so many gallant fleets, with the armies they bore, and which would laugh at the opposition of the united world? The Lord Jesus walks upon its rolling surges,‡ and speaks its most tempestuous

* Matth. xvii. 27. How wonderful is this seemingly little miracle! or rather, what a cluster of wonders is comprised in this single act! That any fish, with money in its mouth, should be catched,—with money just of such a value,—and in the very first fish that offered itself! What a pregnant display of omniscience to know, of omnipotence to overrule, all these fortuitous incidents!

† About fourteen-pence.

‡ "He treadeth upon the waves of the sea," is one of the prerogatives ascribed to the most high God, Job ix. 8. The original word במותי signifies "a sea, that rolls mountain high:" and such, we have reason to suppose, were the waves on which our Lord walked; since the vessel to which he bent his course was βασανιζομενον, "lashed, battered, tormented," by their vehement concussions, Matth. xiv. 24.

agitations into a calm. "The waves of the sea are mighty and rage terribly;" but "yet the Lord," who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, "is mightier," Psal. xciii. 5.

The winds are yet more ungovernable than the madding ocean. When these are hurled* abroad to shatter the forests, and shake the shores, who can curb their rage? what can withstand their impetuosity? Even the boisterous winds hear the Saviour's voice; and as soon as they hear, obey. His voice, more powerful to restrain than brazen dungeons to confine, chides the furious whirlwind. The furious whirlwind is awed into immediate silence, Matth. viii. 26.; Mark iv. 39. That which a moment ago heaved the billows to the clouds, and filled with outrage the howling firmament, now gently whispers among the shrouds, and scarcely curls the smooth expanse.

Something there is, even within the narrow compass of our own breasts, which affords room for more signal exertions of Deity, than the turbulent billows or the resistless storm. Agreeably to the suggestion of a prophet, "For, lo! he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind;" and, as a more pregnant proof of divine perfection, "declareth unto man what is his thought, the God of Hosts is his name," Amos iv. 13.; the possessor of such surpassing power and wisdom must unquestionably be the supreme Lord. And who is this but Jesus Christ? "He knew what was in man," John ii. 25. He discerned the secrets of the heart; discerned the latent purpose before it disclosed itself in action, even before it was uttered in speech; nay, while it lay yet an unformed embryo in the mind.

His glance pierced into futurity; espied events in all their circumstances, Mark xiv. 13. and with the greatest perspicuity, before they came into being. The hidden things of darkness were open, and the

* This is the literal translation of that beautiful Hebrew phrase, which occurs Jonah i. 4. The sacred writer, describing the stormy messenger which was dispatched to arrest a fugitive servant, says, חֵיטִיל, "The Lord hurled forth a great wind."

contingencies of to-morrow were present, to his all-pervading eye. Nay, the unthought-of revolutions even of distant ages, the astonishing catastrophe of dissolving nature, and the awful process of everlasting judgment, he clearly foresaw, and particularly foretold.

Nor does he only penetrate the recesses, but overrule the operations of the soul. He so intimidated a multitude of sacrilegious wretches, that they fled, not before his drawn sword or bent bow, but at the shaking of his scourge John ii. 14. He so awed, by one short remonstrance, John viii. 7. an assembly of conceited and ostentatious Pharisees, that they could neither gainsay, nor endure the energy of his discourse; though, not to endure, was a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, and must cover them with public confusion. With a word, the most mild and gentle imaginable, John xviii. 6. he flung such terror into a band of armed men, as blasted all their courage, and laid them stunned and prostrate on the ground.

"All hearts are in his hand. He turneth them as the rivers of water, whithersoever he will," Prov. xxi. 1.; with as much ease, and with the same efficacious sway, as the current of the rivers is turned by every inflection of the channel. "Follow me," was his call to James and John: "Follow me,"* Mark ii. 14. was all he said to Levi the publican. Though the first were engaged in all the ardour of business; though the last was sitting at the very receipt of custom; yet both he and they, without any demur, or the least delay, left their employ, left their nearest relations, and resigned their earthly all, to attend a

* He said in the beginning, "Let there be light;" there was light: "Let there be a firmament;" it was spread abroad: "Let there be a world;" it arose of nothing. In the days of his flesh, likewise, he speaks, and it is done. His word is a work. He says to the disciples, "Follow me;" they come: To the leper, "Be clean;" he is cleansed: To the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk;" it is all performed as soon as commanded. Surely then we must confess this is the voice of a God, not of a man! Γινηθητω is our Lord's usual word, when he grants a miraculous cure; which exactly corresponds with *that admired* and magnificent expression in the original, Gen. i. 3.

poor and despised master. Their acquaintance, no doubt, would remonstrate a thousand inconveniencies, their enemies would not fail to censure them as rash enthusiasts; but all these considerations were lighter than dust, were less than nothing, when set in competition with two words only from Jesus of Nazareth. Impressed, deeply impressed by his powerful summons, such loss they counted gain, and such obloquy glory.

He planted bowels of compassion in the unfeeling avaricious wretch, and elevated, beyond the height of the stars, desires that lay grovelling even below the mire of the swine. The slaves of sin he restored to the liberty of righteousness; and unhappy creatures, who were degenerated into the likeness of the devil, he renewed after the image of the blessed God. These were the effects of his personal preaching; these are still the conquests of his glorious gospel: And do not these declare his dominion over the intellectual economy? that the world of minds, as well as of material nature, is open to his inspection, and subject to his control?

The dead seem to be more remote from human cognizance than the secrets of the breast; less liable to any human jurisdiction than the warring elements. What potentate can issue a writ of release to the grave? or cite the dislodged soul to re-enter the breathless corpse? Yet this, even this, our mighty Mediator executed. He opened the eyes which were sunk in their sockets, and sealed in the tomb. He bid the heart, that had forgot its vital motion, spring into renewed and vigorous life. The crimson flood, long congealed by the icy hand of death; which had not only lost its pulse by stagnation, but likewise changed its very texture by "putrefaction," John xi. 39. circulates at his order, all florid and mantling with health, through the wondering veins. The spirit, which had taken its flight into the invisible state, had taken its place in eternal habitations, returns at our Redeemer's signal to the tenement of mouldering clay; and, by

the amazing visit, proclaims his sovereignty over those unknown realms and their mysterious inhabitants.

As he recalls from, so he admits into the abodes of future happiness. In the very lowest depths of his humiliation, he disposed of the seats of bliss, and the thrones of glory. His hands, when swollen with wounds, and nailed to the tree, evidently sustained "the keys of hell and of death," Rev. i. 18. Then, even then, he opened and he shut either the gates of the grave or the portals of paradise. What he speaks to the penitent thief, is the language of supreme authority: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It is a royal mandamus, not an humble petition.

Does our Lord's superiority extend to those malignant beings, the devil and his angels? Even these, in spite of all their formidable strength and inextinguishable rage, he makes his footstool. He brake the teeth of those infernal lions, and rescued the helpless prey on which their bloody jaws were closing. At his command they abandon their conquests, and relinquish, however indignant, however reluctant, their long accustomed habitations. His single command, more forcible than ten thousand thunderbolts, dispossesses a whole legion (Mark v. 9.) of those fierce and haughty spirits; drives them, all terrified, and deprecating severer vengeance, to seek rest in solitary deserts, or to herd with the most sordid brutes.

As the blessed Jesus treads upon the necks of those powers of darkness, he receives the willing services of the angels of light. They that excel* in strength, and are active as flames of fire, even they fulfil his commandment, and hearken unto the voice of his words. They graced the solemnity of his birth; they attended him after his temptation in the wilderness; they were the first joyful preachers of his triumphant resurrection; and, now he is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the highest,—

* Would any one see a sketch of the glory and excellence of the *angelic nature*? Let him see it in that inimitably fine stroke of the sacred *pencil*: "*I* saw another angel come down from heaven, having great *power, and the* earth was lightened with his glory," Rev. xviii. 1.

——They stand with wings outspread,
Listening to catch their Master's least command,
And fly through nature, ere the moment end.

Behold him now doing according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; swaying the sceptre over the legions of hell, and the powers of nature; exercising dominion in the hearts of men, in the territories of the grave, and mansions of disembodied spirits. Then let my Theron determine—under such views of our Saviour's unequalled majesty and unbounded sovereignty, let him determine—whether it be safer to rest our infinite and eternal interests on our own righteousness rather than on his.

We have selected some few manifestations of our Redeemer's excellent greatness. Even the evangelical historians give us no larger a proportion of his astonishing deeds, than the first-fruits bear to a copious harvest: Yet, were they all particularly enumerated, and circumstantially displayed, they would appear inconsiderable, compared with those far more distinguished trophies of almighty power which he has decreed in some future period to erect.*

He will gather to his sacred fold the people of his ancient church, though they are dispersed into all lands, and most inveterately prejudiced against the truth of his gospel. How mighty was his hand, how illustriously outstretched his arm, when he made a path through the surges of the ocean, drove the torrent of Jordan backwards, and fetched rivers of water from the flinty rock! Far more mighty will be its operations, when he shall remove the seemingly insurmountable obstructions to the general restoration of the Jews; shall throw all their religious apprehensions into a new channel; and cause tears of penitential

* The dignity of our Lord, considered as the Creator and Preserver of all things, is not mentioned here; because something of this kind is professedly attempted in the "Descant upon Creation," subjoined to the "Meditations among the Tombs," &c. to which I beg leave to refer my readers.

sorrow to start from their stony eyes, confessions of unfeigned faith to issue from their blaspheming lips. —Yet thus it will assuredly be. In the volume of the divine book it is written, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn," Zech. xii. 10. They shall adore as the Messiah, the once despised Galilean; and fix all their hopes of final felicity on that very person whom their fathers slew and hanged on a tree.

Amazing revolution in the religious world! Yet this, together with the destruction of antichrist, and the illumination of the benighted Gentiles, may pass for small incidents, compared with those stupendous events which will dignify and signalize the closing scene of affairs.

Then shall the Lord Jesus be manifested in unspeakable glory, and exert such acts of omnipotence as will be the terror of hell, the joy of heaven, the wonder of eternity. Then will he put an end to time, and bid the springs of nature cease to operate. Then shall his tremendous trumpet rend the universal vault, and pierce the dormitories of the dead. Then will he "shake the earth out of its place," Job ix. 6. and before his majestic presence the "heavens shall flee away."* Then shall, not a nation only, but multi-

* How grand is the idea, when David prays! "Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke." Much grander is the image when he says, "The springs of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered, at thy chiding, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy displeasure." Transcendently and inimitably grand is this description, though given us by the most plain and artless writer in the world: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was no place found for them," Rev. xx. 11.

In Virgil's admired representation, Jupiter hurls his thunder, and a mountain falls at the stroke:

——"Ille flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit." *Georg.* I. 331.

In Homer's more terror-striking piece, Neptune shakes the wide extended earth. The mountains tremble to their centre; the ocean heaves *its billows;* and cities reel on their foundations:—

tudes, multitudes of nations, "be born in a day," Isa. lx. 8.; yea, rather, in an hour, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. All that are asleep in the beds of death; even those who, perishing in tempests, are sunk to the bottom of the ocean, or, swallowed up by earthquakes, are buried at the centre of the globe—all shall hear his voice; and hearing, shall awake; and awaking, shall come forth. Every human body, though ages have revolved since it gave up the ghost; though worms have devoured the flesh, and dissolution mouldered the bones; though its parts have been grinded by the teeth of beasts, or consumed by the rage of fire; dissipated in viewless winds, or scattered over the boundless globe; lost to our senses, and lost even to our imagination—yet will every human body then be restored; its limbs reassembled, and not an atom wanting; its frame rebuilt, and never be demolished more.

Then shall the unnumbered myriads of departed spirits return from their separate abodes; and, commissioned by him "who is the resurrection and the life," reanimate each his organized system. Then shall Satan and his accomplices, those execrable and horrid criminals, be dragged from their dungeons of darkness, and receive their doom at the Redeemer's tribunal. Then will misery and happiness, both consummate, and both everlasting, be awarded by the Saviour's sentence. Then will he consign over the ungodly world, and the rebellious angels, to the flames of hell, and to agonies of despair. Then will he invest the righteous with the inheritance of heaven, and instate them in the fulness of joy. His word is fate; immutability seals, and eternity executes, whatever he decrees.

——— Αυταρ υπερθε Ποσειδαων ενοσιχθων
Γαιαν απτερεσσιν, ορεων τ' αιπεινα καρηνα.
Παντες δ' ιστιωντο ποδες πολυπιδακος Ιδης,
Και πορυφαι, Τρωωντε πολις, και νηες Αχαιων. *Iliad* Y. 57.

Here, the Son of the eternal God appears only, and all nature is alarmed; nor heaven nor earth can keep their standing; they flee away, like the frighted roe. How grovelling are the loftiest flights of the Grecian and Roman muse, compared with this magnificence and elevation of the prophetic spirit!

And has this Jesus, so glorious, so majestic, so adorable—has he vouchsafed to take our nature, and become our righteousness? was he made under the law? did he fulfil all its demands? give perfect satisfaction to the penal, and yield perfect obedience to the preceptive? on purpose that the merit of all might be made over to us? Astonishing condescension! ineffable grace! What thanks are due to such infinitely rich goodness! What a remedy is here for the impotence and guilt of fallen man! What a sure foundation of hope, and what an abundant source of joy, to every one that believeth!

It is declared by the oracle of God, "That such an High-priest became us," was absolutely necessary for our obnoxious and ruined condition, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,—and made higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26. It appears, I flatter myself, from the letter already in your hand, that Christ fully answered the former character; and from this epistle I hope it will appear, that he is the very person described in the latter clause.

Estimate now, my dear friend, estimate if you can, the glory and excellency of this sublime person. Then may you learn how to state the worth of his righteousness, and the degree of affiance suited to his merits. Rather you will perceive, that his spotless birth, his perfectly obedient life, his exquisitely bitter death, are a satisfaction of unknown dignity; precious,* far beyond all the graces of men, and all the duties of angels; able to save to the uttermost all that rely on them, and come unto God through them.

Consonant to this are the sentiments of that penetrating critic and profound scholar, Dr Lightfoot, who, treating of our Saviour's obedience, says,—"Add to all this, the dignity of his person who performed this obedience; that he was God as well as man: and his obedience is infinite; such as in its

* This is expressed by the sacred historian, with an energy which no *translation* can equal; την τιμην τυ τετιμημενυ, ον ετιμησαντο απο υιων Ισραηλ. Matth. xxvii. 9.

validity subdued Satan, and in its all-sufficiency satisfied the justice of God." After which, our celebrated author makes this important and delightful improvement: "Think, Christian, what a stock of obedience and righteousness here is for thee, to answer and satisfy for thy disobedience and unrighteousness, if thou become a child of the covenant. Here is enough for every soul that comes to him, be they never so many. Like the widow's oil in the book of Kings, there is enough and enough again, and as long as any vessel is brought to receive it." *

We need not wonder that Gentiles, who are ignorant of the Redeemer; that Jews, who treat him with contemptuous scorn; that professors of religion, who deny his eternal Godhead; place little, if any, confidence in his righteousness. But it is strange that Christians, who know the Saviour, who acknowledge his divinity, and believe him to be exalted above all blessing and praise—it is exceedingly strange, that they do not rejoice in him, make their boast of him, and say, with a becoming disdain, of every other dependence, "Get ye hence," Isa. xxx. 22.

Such an assemblage of divine perfections must warrant, must demand, the most undivided and the most unbounded confidence. There never was, no, not in all ages nor in all worlds, any thing greater or richer, more dignified or exalted, than the obedience of our Lord. Nay, it is impossible to imagine what could be so suited to our wants, so proper for our reliance, or so sure to answer, more than answer, all our expectations.

Remember what the apostle affirms, and you will not wonder at my assertion: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." How comprehensive and exalted is this description! It collects into a point all the rays of majesty and honour. It expresses in a sentence, I say, not whatever this pen has written, but whatever of dignity and excellence the Bible itself contains. "The Godhead," the nature

* *Lightfoot's* Works, vol. ii. p. 1258.

and essence of the Deity: "the fulness of the Godhead;" unerring wisdom, almighty power, and whatever the great Jehovah challenges as his own: "all the fulness;" every adorable attribute, in the most ample measure, and in the highest degree: all this "dwells," not visits occasionally, but statedly, invariably, eternally resides; "dwells in Christ Jesus bodily," with an union inconceivably close and intimate; insomuch that the Godhead inhabiting, and the manhood inhabited, make but one and the same Person.

Therefore, adds the sacred disputant, "Ye are complete in him," Col. ii. 9, 10. Never was any conclusion more weighty in itself, or founded on more solid principles. Ye are not only pardoned, but reconciled; and not only reconciled, but justified; nay, ye are—and what can be said or desired more?—"ye are complete:" And not barely before men or angels, but before infinite purity, and omniscience itself. "Ye are made (amazing and charming truth!) the righteousness of God," 2 Cor. v. 21. in this wonderful Saviour. What a fountain is this, or rather what a sea of fathomless depth, to obliterate all sins, and supply all wants! What a mirror of God's stupendous grace, and ever-to-be-adored loving-kindness!

Here let our meditations fix, and here let all our expectations centre. From this, not from any thing of our own, let us derive our peace, our joy, our supreme complacency. Into this subject we can never dive too deeply. Of this subject we can never think too magnificently. The righteousness of Christ is the master-pillar, on which our eternal welfare rests. Nay, it is the only support which preserves us from sinking into endless perdition.

> There hangs all human hope; that nail supports
> Our falling universe.

This renders his intercession prevalent. He is an advocate, a successful advocate with the Father. Why? Because he is "Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1.—From hence results his ability to justify. "*He shall* justify many," saith the Lord Jehovah.

On what consideration? Because he is "my righteous servant," Isa. liii. 11. This, and no other, is the meritorious cause of our salvation. "Judah shall be saved;" shall escape damnation, and inherit glory. On what account? On account of "the righteous Branch raised up unto David,"* Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.—Since, then, our acceptance, justification, and salvation; since our comfort in time, and our happiness to eternity, all depend upon the righteousness of Christ; how should we delight in contemplating its faultless, its matchless, its transcendent excellency!—Grand! all-sufficient! in every respect perfect! Nothing equal to it, on earth, in heaven, throughout the universe! surpassing the enormity of our guilt! surpassing the reach of our imagination! surpassing all that we can express or conceive! being truly, properly, absolutely divine!

And is this righteousness mine? is this righteousness yours, Theron? is this righteousness free for every sinner? Pleasing, captivating, rapturous thought! Who can forbear exulting and triumphing in this boundless, this infinite blessing? On such an occasion, methinks, some sallies of enthusiasm, or even starts of tautology, are the language of sensibility, of propriety, of nature. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord, the Lord himself, hath done it." Our justifying righteousness is finished; finished by Jehovah sojourning in human clay. "Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein. For the Lord hath most marvellously redeemed Jacob, and no less illustriously glorified himself in the recovery of Israel," Isa. xliv. 23. O for the tongue of a seraph! But even this would be defective; such ardour cold, and such energy languid.

* I believe it will be needless to observe, that the salvation mentioned in this and other passages of like import, is not limited to a temporal deliverance, but extends to a state of spiritual and eternal happiness. The temporal is only a subordinate blessing; a kind of appendage to the other; somewhat like the halo round the globe of the moon, or that *faint and* secondary range of colours which frequently *attends the glowing* rainbow.

I have done; I add no more; I leave it—to some future letter? to some more laboured essay? No; but to the hymns of heaven, and the adorations of eternity, to supply the deficiency of my acknowledgments. In the mean time, let me entreat my Theron to contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ under that most illustrious character described by the prophet, "A priest upon his throne," Zech. vi. 13.; dignifying the sacerdotal censer by the regal diadem; adding all the honours of his eternal divinity to the sacrifice of his bleeding humanity. Then, I promise myself, you will find it almost impossible not to adopt the emphatical and ardent protestation of the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory," that I should confide, "save only in the obedience and the cross of Christ Jesus my Lord!"

When you made the tour of France and Italy, and, crossing the Alps, gained the summit of some commanding ridge; when you looked round with astonishment and delight on the ample plains, which, crowded with cities and adorned with palaces, stretch their beauteous tracts below; when you surveyed the famous rivers that roll in silent but shining dignity, stating the boundaries of kingdoms, and wafting plenty through the gladdened nations; when you shot your transported view to the ocean, whose unmeasurable flood meets the arch of heaven, and terminates the landscape with inconceivable grandeur; did you then chuse to forego the pleasure resulting from such a prospect, in order to gaze upon the naked crag of some adjacent rock? or could you turn your eyes from those magnificent objects, and fasten them with pleased attention upon a shallow puddle that lay stagnating at your feet?

You who have beheld the scene, can accommodate the simile with peculiar advantage. For which reason I shall wave the application, and only beg leave to transcribe a wish that is now warm on my heart, and is often breathed in supplication from my lips:—*May the* Father of our spirits, and the Fountain of

wisdom, give us an enlightened "understanding to know him that is true!" grant us the inestimable blessing, "that we may be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: For this Saviour is the true God, and that privilege is life eternal," 1 John v. 20.

My Theron needs no argument to convince him, that such a prayer is an act of rational and real friendship—is the most genuine and substantial proof, that I am his truly affectionate ASPASIO.

LETTER IX.—THERON TO ASPASIO.

DEAR ASPASIO,—YOUR two letters have reached my hand, and I hope they have not missed my heart. I might inform you what pleasure they gave me, and how highly I esteem them. But you desire no such compliments; you desire to see me impressed with the sentiments, and living under their influence. This would be the most acceptable acknowledgment to my Aspasio, because it would be the most happy effect to his Theron. May every day, therefore, bring a fresh accession of such gratitude to me, and of such satisfaction to you!

To watch for my soul, and pray for my salvation, I am thoroughly convinced, is the truest instance of rational and exalted friendship. Every claim to that amiable character is defective and vain, if it does not extend to our spiritual interests and our everlasting welfare. For which reason, I need not entreat you to continue and perpetuate this best expression of social kindness. Or, if I do, it is rather to testify how much I prize the favour, than to prompt your affectionate and ready mind.

Your last found me at a friend's house, which lies pretty near the western ocean. Yesterday, waked by the lark, and rising with the dawn, I strolled into the fragrant air and dewy fields; while, as Shakspeare, with *his usual sprightliness*, expresses himself,

——Jocund day
Stood tip-toe on the misty mountain's top.

Sweet was the breath of morn, and sweet the exhalations of the freshened flowers; grateful were the soft salutes of the cooling zephyrs, attended with the charm of earliest birds; delightful the sun, painting with his orient beams the chambers of the firmament, and unveiling the face of universal nature.

My mind, but little affected with these inferior entertainments, was engaged in contemplating an object of infinitely superior dignity; in contemplating that adorable Being, who raised, from nothing raised, this stupendous system of things, and supports, with his word supports, the magnificent frame; who (to speak in the language of his own Spirit) "openeth the eyelids of the morning, and commandeth the day-spring to know its place, Job xxxviii. 12.; commandeth the light, by its punctual and pleasing ministrations, to draw aside the curtain of darkness, and discover the skies shining with glories, and disclose the earth blooming with beauties.

"Father of light and life," said my transported mind,

——Thou Good Supreme!
O teach me what is good! teach me Thyself.
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit! and feed my soul
With faith, with conscious peace, and virtue pure,
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss. THOMSON'S *Winter.*

Wrapt in wonder, and lost in thought, I rambled carelessly along, till I was insensibly brought to the shore, which in these parts is prodigiously high and strong, perfectly well fitted to stand as an everlasting barrier* against the impetuous stroke of conflicting winds, and the ponderous sweep of dashing surges.

* These, doubtless, are "the doors and the bars," which the Almighty mentions in the course of his awful interrogatories to Job: the massy doors, which can never be forced; the solid bars, which can never be broke; and, I may add, the conspicuous columns on which his Providence has inscribed that sovereign mandate, "Ne plus ultra." *Or, as the prohibition* runs in his own majestic words, "Hitherto shalt *thou go, but* no farther, Job xxxviii. 10.

Not that the omnipotent Engineer has any need of these impregnable ramparts. Here, it is true, they intervene, and not only repress the rolling invader, but speak the amazing majesty of their Maker. In other places, all such laboured methods of fortification are laid aside. The Creator shews the astonished world that he is confined to no expedients, but orders all things "according to the pleasure of his own will." He bids a low bank of despicable sand receive and repel the most furious shocks of assaulting seas; and "though the waves thereof toss themselves" with incredible fierceness, yet can they not prevail; though "they roar," and seem to menace universal destruction, "yet can they not pass over," Jer. v. 22. this slightest of mounds.

A winding passage broke the declivity of the descent, and led me by a gradual slope to the bottom. The moon being in her last quarter, and the tide at its greatest recess, I walked for a while "where briny waves were wont to flow." The ebbing waters had left a vacant space several furlongs broad, equal in length to a very extended vista, smooth on its surface as the most level bowling-green, and almost as firm as the best compacted causeway. Insomuch that the tread of a horse scarce impresses it, and the waters of the sea never penetrate it. Exclusive of this wise contrivance, the searching waves would insinuate themselves into the heart of the earth; the earth itself would be hollow as an honey-comb, or bibulous as a sponge; and the sea, soaking by degrees through all its cavities, would in process of time forsake its bed, and mingle with the plains and mountains. But this closely cemented or glutinous kind of pavement, is like claying the bottom of the universal canal; so that the returning tides consolidate, rather than perforate its substance, and prevent the sun from cleaving it with chinks. Such, I hope, will be the case with this soul of mine, and the temptations that beset me. Beset me they do, they will: but may they never win upon my affections, nor gain admittance into my

heart! Let them make me humble, and keep me vigilant; teach me to walk closely with my God, and urge me to an incessant dependence on Christ. Then, instead of being ruinous, they may become advantageous; and instead of shattering, will only cleanse the rock on which they dash.

The mighty waters, restless even in their utmost tranquillity, with a solemn but placid murmur struck my ear. The billows, sometimes advancing to kiss the sand, sometimes drawing back their curly heads into the deep, whitened at their extremities into an agreeable foam, which, with the reflexive representation of the azure canopy, formed the appearance of a most spacious floating mantle, tinged with a beautiful blue, and edged with fringes of silver. Dignity and elegance, I find, are the inseparable characteristics of the Creator's workmanship; as comfort and happiness, I sometimes perceive, are the very spirit of his gospel, and the genuine produce of its commands.

On one side, the Atlantic main rolled its surges from world to world.—Immense, immense diffusion of waters! What a spectacle of magnificence and terror! what an irresistible incitement to reverence and awe! How it fills the mind, and amazes the imagination! It is the grandest and most august object under the whole heavens. It reminds me of that apocalyptic vision which John, the enraptured seer, beheld! "As it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed," Rev. viii. 8, 9. I have not penetration enough to discover the spiritual meaning of this passage; but I discern a most dreadful grandeur in its plain and literal sense. If we consider the wonderful compass and the terrible force of such an enormous mass of fire; if we consider its horrible and destructive effects on such a vast body of waters as the third part of the ocean; how tremendous and *astonishing* is the idea! Surely nothing but divine

inspiration could suggest these images, as none but an almighty Being can execute this vengeance! Who would not fear an eternal King, that has such weapons, and such artillery "reserved against the day of battle and war?" Job xxxviii. 23.

Spacious as the sea is, God has provided a garment to cover it. Profound as the sea is, God has prepared swaddling-bands to inwrap it. Ungovernable as it may seem to us, he overrules it with as much ease as the nurse manages a new-born infant, Job xxxviii. 8, 9. An infant it is before almighty power, and to an infant it is compared by Jehovah himself; though, to our apprehension, it raves like a stupendous madman. But if he command, it opens a peaceful bosom, and receives his people. It smooths the way for their passage, and stands as a bulwark for their defence. They march "through the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters are a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left," Exod. xiv. 22. If he reverses his mandate, they drive down, with an irresistible sweep, upon the hosts of Pharaoh, and overwhelm the chariots and horses of Egypt. They pour confusion upon arrogance,* and disappoint the designs of persecution and cruelty. If he says, "Be still," the bellowing surges are hushed, and the gentlest lamb is not so quiet. If he says, "Destroy," even the quiescent waters kindle into rage, they rise in their Maker's cause, and ten thousand lions, stung with hunger and rushing upon their prey, are not so fierce. When he bids them execute any other commission, the horse broke to the bit, the spaniel disciplined to the signal, are not half so dutiful and obsequious. And shall our passions be more wild than the winds, more turbulent than the billows? Forbid

* *Arrogance*—This is described with exquisite delicacy in the Exultation, or triumphant song of Moses: "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, mine hand shall destroy them." What swelling words of vanity are here!—How noble is the turn, and how exalted the sentiment which follows! "Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered *them, they* sank as lead in the mighty waters."

it, almighty Lord! "Thou that rulest the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, restrain, subdue, and calm the madness of the people."

The eye travels hard; it wanders over a vast, vast length of fluctuating plains. It reaches the limits of the hemisphere, where skies and waves seem to mingle. Yet it has scarce made an entry upon the world of waters. What I here discern is no more than the skirts of the great and wide sea. Tracts incomparably broader are still behind, and tracts of unbounded extent are behind even those. Great then, O my soul, inconceivably great, is that adored and glorious Sovereign, who sitteth upon this flood as upon a throne! Psalm xxix. 10.; nay, who holds it, diffused as it is from pole to pole, in the hollow of his hand; and before whom, in all its prodigious dimensions, it is but as the drop of a bucket. How shall reptiles of the ground sink low enough in their own apprehensions! What humiliation can be sufficiently deep for sinful mortals, before this high and holy One! Yet how may they rise on the wings of hope! how may they soar on the pinions of faith! when, in the language of his prophet, and in his own Son's name, they thus address the everlasting God. "Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake for our succour and security, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it, which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" Isa. li. 9, 10.

How grand, surprisingly grand and majestic, are the works, as well as the attributes of an omnipotent Being! What are all the canals in all the countries of the earth, compared with this immense reservatory! What are all the superb edifices erected by royal munificence, compared with yonder concave of the skies! And what are the most pompous illuminations of theatres and triumphant cities, compared with the *resplendent* source of day! They are a spark, an

atom, a drop.—Nay, in every spark, and atom, and drop, which proceeds from the hand of the Almighty, there is the manifestation of a wisdom and a power absolutely incomprehensible.

Let us examine a single drop of water, the very least quantity that the eye can discern, only so much as will just adhere to the point of a needle. In this almost imperceptible speck, a famous philosopher computes no less than thirteen thousand globules. Amazing to conceive! impossible to explicate!—If then, in so small a speck, abundantly more than ten thousand globules exist, what myriads of myriads must float in the unmeasured extent of the ocean!—Let the ablest arithmetician try to comprehend in his mind, not the internal constitution, but only the number of these fluid particles. As well may he grasp the winds in his fist, or mete out the universe with his span, as execute the task. If, then, we are utterly unable to number (which is the most superficial of all researches) even the most common works of the great Jehovah; how can we pretend to lay open the secrets, and penetrate the recesses of his infinite mind! How can we pretend to investigate the whole process, and solve all the difficulties of that highest and deepest of the divine schemes—redemption!

I have sometimes been offended, I must confess, when you have enlarged upon the mysterious truths of Christianity. But I perceive the beam was in my own eye, when I fancied the mote was in my friend's. Is there, in every ray of light, and in every particle of matter, a depth of contrivance unfathomable by the line of any human understanding? And shall there be nothing abstruse or profound, nothing but what is level to our scanty apprehensions, in the "great things" (Hos. viii. 12.) of God's law, and the "glorious things" (Acts ii. 11.) of his gospel? To expect this, is just as wise in itself, and just as congruous to nature, as to expect a sea, whose cavities might have been digged by our spade;—a sky, whose arches are measurable by our compass;—a sun, whose orb *may be included* in our lanterns.

When, therefore, I read of One uncreated and eternal Being subsisting in three divine persons; when I hear of an infinitely pure and perfect God made flesh for the redemption of sinful men; when I meditate upon the righteous and universal Judge, reconciling the world unto himself by the death of his own Son; when a thousand curious and inquisitive thoughts are ready to arise on the occasion; I will bid them first sound the depths of a single drop, and then apply their plummet to the boundless ocean. This, I am very sure, is not weak credulity, nor wild enthusiasm, but the maturest dictate of reason, and the very precision of truth. Let then the great Creator make that sublime declaration: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 9. Let every human creature add that humble acknowledgment: "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.; and not devotion only, but reason and truth will say "Amen" to both.

You see, Aspasio, how I am trying to adopt your spirit. You will observe the willing scholar, though not the great proficient. But stay! Is this right? to divert from such commanding subjects, and take notice of mere punctilios? My friend may spare his frowns: I am surprised and angry at myself. Away with the little arts of self-recommendation. Self should be forgot, should be swallowed up and lost in devout astonishment, when we are viewing the magnificence, and meditating on the wonders of creation.

Behind me, and far off to the north, Cambria's dusky coasts just, and but just, emerged. Lost were all her woods and mountains. Instead of ornamented towns and cultivated plains, a confused mist, or a low-hung cloud, seemed to hover on the ocean's remotest brim. Behind me! Remembrance is roused at the expression, and conscience sharpens her sting.

Ah! how often and how long have I treated in this very manner, the noblest scenes, and the sublimest joys! have turned my back—ungrateful and besotted creature!—upon the heavenly country, and wandered from the regions of infinite delight! Therefore now they appear dim. I have scarcely a glimpse of their transcendent excellencies. Or if I see them by faith, it is with frequent intermissions, and much obscurity. Turn me, O thou God of my salvation, turn me from pursuing phantoms, and attach me to thy blessed self. Let me henceforth steer an invariable course to Emmanuel's kingdom. May its treasures, as I advance, open to my view, and its glories brighten in my eye. O! may some odours, better, far better than Sabæan spicy odours, exhale from the delectable hills and the celestial shores!—But chiefly, thou eternal Spirit, breathe upon my soul, both by thy convincing and comforting influences! nor ever cease to swell my sails, and speed my progress, till I arrive at "the land that is very far off, and see the King," the King of grace and of glory, "in all his ineffable beauty," Isa. xxxiii. 17.

On my left hand, a range of mountainous cliffs rose in a perpendicular direction. The huge pile extended, as far as the sight could discern, its black boundaries. Here bending inwards to the land; there bellying out into the deep; every-where projecting a shade several leagues across the ocean.

The height of these cliffs so prodigious, that every human creature who comes near the summit, starts back terrified and aghast. Only a few straggling goats venture to graze on the top; and these, to a person walking below, appear but as specks of moving white; while the sea-mews, that winnow the air about the middle steep, look like winged animalcules pursuing their little sports in a different region. The aspect of these cliffs, so wild and horrid, it is impossible to behold them without a shivering dread. The spectator is apt to imagine, that nature had formerly suffered some violent convulsions, or been shattered by the

flaming bolts, and that these are the dismembered remains of the dreadful stroke; the ruins, not of Persepolis or Palmyra, but of the world!

Amazing! What adventurous daring creature is yonder, gathering samphire from the cavities of the rocks! He has let himself down several fathoms beneath the black and dizzy summit. He gleans a poor livelihood, from the edges of danger shall I say? rather, from the jaws of death. I cannot discern the rope to which he clings. He seems to be suspended over the tremendous precipice by a thread, by a hair, by nothing.—I will look no longer. The very sight chills my veins. While I view his perilous elevation, I can think of nothing but a headlong downfall and fractured bones; of brains left to reek on the pointed crags, and blood streaming on the discoloured beach.

Suppose (if the mind can bear so shocking a supposition) some poor wretch, exposed on the brow of this stupendous promontory; without any support for his feet; and cleaving only to a weak slender shrub, which but just adheres to the interstices of the rock: What tumultuous throbbings seize his breast! what a dying paleness invades his cheeks! and what agonies of fear rend his heart, as he hangs projecting over the ragged precipice; and surveys the ocean, deep, wondrous deep, below! The bough gives way. His only hope fails. It yields more and more to his weight. Good heavens! he sinks! he sinks!—O!,for some friendly hand, to snatch him from perishing! Millions, millions of gold, were the cheap purchase of such a mercy. There was a time, my soul, when thou wast in a situation, equally, shall I say? infinitely more dangerous; tottering, not only on the verge of life, but on the very brink of hell. Remember that compassionate arm, which was stretched out, in the very article of need, to rescue thee from imminent and everlasting perdition. Never forget that gracious voice which said, in accents sweeter than the music of the seraphic choir, "Deliver him from going down into

the pit. Let his health be restored, and his day of grace be prolonged."

In some places, the hideous ruins not only tower to the skies, but lean over the strand. Prominent and frightfully pendulous, they nod horror, and threaten destruction on all below. A person congratulates himself when he has got clear of the bending precipice, and can hardly forbear thinking that the enormous load is withheld by some unseen hand, till the execrable wretch, doomed to a most astonishing vengeance, is come within reach of the blow. And truly, if he had the strength of the elephant, or the firmness of the behemoth, this must grind him to powder, or even crush him into atoms.

How awful to consider, that there is a day coming, when wicked potentates and haughty monarchs will beg of yonder seas to yawn compassionately deep, and hide them in their darkest abysses—hide them from the piercing eye and avenging sword of inflexible justice: That there is a day coming, when the soft voluptuary, the wanton beauty, and all the ungodly of the earth, will beseech these tremendous ridges, with all their unsupportable burden of craggy rocks, to rush down upon their guilty heads! Rev. vi. 16.; if by this means they may be screened from the infinitely more dreaded weight of divine indignation.

Vain are their cries; and vainer still would be their refuge, should their passionate requests be granted. Can floods conceal the impious wretches, when the caverns of the ocean shall be laid bare, and the foundations of the world be discovered? Can rocks secrete an obnoxious rebel, when rocks, with all their marble quarries and adamantine entrails, shall dissolve like melting wax? when hills, that plunge their roots to the centre, and lose their towering heads in air, shall start from their affrighted base,* and flee away

* This brings to our remembrance a most sublime description of the divine power, which arises in a beautiful climax, and terminates in this grand idea: "The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation, the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice. The voice of the Lord

like a withered leaf? Good God!* what racking anguish must they feel! what inexpressibly severer torment must they fear! who can implore, ardently implore as a most desirable favour, what imagination itself shudders to conceive.

In some places, these mountainous declivities lift their brow aloft, plant their basis deep, and, instead of portending a fall, defy the fury of the most impetuous elements. Firmly consolidated, and steadfastly established, they have withstood the united, the repeated assaults of winds and waves, through a long series of revolving ages. The sacred writers, I observe, select almost all the striking images which the whole creation affords, in order to communicate their heavenly ideas with the greatest advantage. Isaiah, describing the security of the righteous, takes his comparison from the grand spectacle before my eyes: "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks," Isa. xxxiii. 16.; inaccessible as those lofty ridges, immoveable as their everlasting foundations.

Should it be asked, what these munitions of rocks may signify? I find two places of refuge and safeguard pointed out in Scripture; to either of which, I believe, the metaphor is applicable. "He had horns," says one of the divine pindarics, "coming out of his hand; there was the hiding of his power," Hab. iii. 4.† Uncontrollable and omnipotent power was

breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn," Psal. xxix. 4—6.

* *Good God!*—This exclamation is introduced on a very serious occasion, and used with an apparent air of reverence. Under which circumstances, perhaps, it may be sometimes allowable, and not dishonourable to the divine Majesty. But when it is admitted into ordinary conversation, on trifling occurrences, and with a levity of temper, it is itself a very great offence, and discovers a very irreligious spirit. —It is so great an offence, that the God of heaven and earth declares himself the avenger of all such transgressors: "He will not hold them guiltless."

† Horns were an emblem of strength. "A horn of salvation," is *put* for a mighty and effectual salvation, Luke ii. 69. "Thou hast

lodged in the great Jehovah's hand; and this was the sure defence, this the impregnable garrison, for all his people. The church of Christ is said to be "in the clefts of the rock," Cant. ii. 14.; that "spiritual Rock," of which the Israelites drank in the wilderness; whose sacred clefts were opened when the bloody spear tore up the Redeemer's side, and cut a wide and deadly passage to his heart. Surely "the inhabitants of this Rock have reason to sing," Isa. xlii. 11. What should disquiet them? Who can destroy them? Why should not the voice of joy be in their dwellings, and that hymn of holy triumph in their mouths, "We have a strong city: Salvation hath God appointed," salvation itself, "for walls and bulwarks?" Isa. xxvi. 1. Happy should I think myself, if I was interested in this Saviour, and established on this Rock.

Yonder, on the summit of the most conspicuous cliff, is erected a grand and stately pile. At the top, my glass discovers a superb lantern; at the foot, are the huts of fishermen, surrounded with various sorts of nets. It is, I suppose, a light-house; intended to apprise the sailor of devouring gulfs, and destructive shoals; or else to conduct him into a safe road, and secure harbour.

Both the situation and design of the building read me a lesson; the one of awful admonition, the other of comfortable instruction.—Comfortable instruction: How massy and ponderous is the edifice! yet there is not the least reason to be apprehensive of a failure in the foundation. Was the structure ten thousand times larger, the solid rock would support it with the utmost ease, and the utmost steadiness. Such is Christ, such are his merits, such his glorious righteousness, to those wise and blessed souls who rest all the weight of their everlasting interests on him alone. Such, did

heard me from among the horns of the unicorns;" thou hast rescued me from the most potent and formidable enemies, Psal. xxii. 21. Here the word seems to denote that power of Jehovah, to which nothing is impossible.

I say? Much surer. For "the mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed," Isa. liv. 10.; but this divine basis can never sink, can never be shaken. —Awful admonition: For it recalls to my memory that alarming yet welcome text,* which you styled the spiritual light-house; which has been as serviceable to my distressed mind and bewildered thoughts, as such an illuminated watch-tower to the wandering and benighted mariner. May I often view it; ever attend to its faithful direction; and be led by its influences into the haven, the desired haven, of peace and salvation!

Let me once again survey those vast but noble deformities; those rude but majestic elevations of stone. Fortifications, reared by an almighty hand, to protect us at once from warring elements and invading enemies. Ramparts, which overlook and command the ocean; which, viewed by distant mariners, seem to touch and prop the sky; which have surrounded our isle ever since the universal deluge, and will be her never-failing defence even to the general conflagration. If some opinionated engineer should take it into his head to suspect the stability of these unshaken and everlasting bulwarks; if he should make proposals for strengthening them with buttresses, or girding them round with cramping-irons, how would his project be received? with approbation and applause, or with contempt and indignation? "Fool that he is, to think of enlarging, corroborating, or improving the finished and magnificent works of nature, by the puny piddlings of art!" Such, so foolish and preposterous, was my once favourite conceit, of adding my own performances in order to increase the justifying efficacy of Christ's obedience. What a disparagement was this to the great, the divine foundation! which, for the support and security of burdened and endangered sinners, is sufficient—is self-sufficient—is all-sufficient.

How changeable is the face of this liquid element!

* See Rom. ix. 30—32.; and above, Letter V.

Not long ago, there was nothing, from this stony boundary to the horizon's utmost verge, but the wildest tumult and most horrible confusion. Now the stormy flood has smoothed its rugged brow, and the watery uproar is lulled into a profound tranquillity. Where rolling mountains rushed and raged, threatening to dash the clouds and deluge the earth; there the gentlest undulations play, and only just wrinkle the surface of the mighty basin. Where the dreadful abyss opened its wide and unfathomable jaws, to swallow up the trembling sailor and his shattered vessel; there a calm and clear expanse diffuses its ample bosom, alluring the fish to bask in the sun, and inviting the sea-fowl to watch for their prey.

In this fair-floating mirror, I see the picture of every cloud which passes through the regions of the sky. But in its uncertain and treacherous temperature, I see more plainly the unconstant and ever-variable condition of human affairs. I durst not be surety to the mariner for peaceful seas and soothing gales: I could not ascertain the continuance of this halcyon weather so much as a single day, or even to the next hour: And let me not fondly promise myself an uninterrupted tenor of serenity in my mind, or of prosperity in my circumstances. Sometimes, indeed, my heart exults under the smile of heaven and the favour of God: But soon, ah! too soon, I am clouded with fear, and oppressed with corruption. I sigh out that passionate acknowledgment, "Wretched man that I am!" and add that wishful inquiry, "Who shall deliver me?" For this disordered state of things, the afflicted patriarch's complaint is the most apposite motto, and the most wholesome memento: "Changes and war are around me," Job x. 17. But there is a world, where disastrous revolutions will be known no more; where our enjoyments will no longer fluctuate like the ocean, but be more steadfast than the rocks, and more immoveable than the shores.

Here I see an immense collection of waters in a state of deep *repose*. Could I extend my view to some

remoter tracts, I should behold every thing smoother and calmer still. Not a furrow sinks, nor a ridge swells the surface of the ocean: It is all like a glassy plain. The waves are asleep: Echo is hushed: Not a gale stirs: The sea stagnates: The mariner is becalmed; and the vessel scarcely creeps. Whereas, could I survey the Straits of Magellan, or the Gut of Gibraltar, I should find a very striking difference. There the waters press in with vehemence, and rush forwards with impetuosity. All is there in strong agitation and rapid progress. The ship is whirled through the narrow passage, and rides, as it were, on the wheels of the surge, or on the wings of the wind. This, my dear Aspasio, is a true image of what I have been, and of what I am. Some months ago, when I was insensible of guilt, all my prayers were listless, and all my religion was a spiritual lethargy. I felt not in my heart what I uttered with my tongue. Hosannahs were but an empty ceremony, and confessions froze on my formal lips. But since the Spirit of God has awakened me from my dream, and convinced me of my sinfulness, I can no longer be satisfied with indolent and yawning devotions. Trials and temptations put strong cries into my mouth. My soul mourns before the Lord; my desires plead with the blessed God; and I am ready to say, as the patriarch of old, "I cannot, I must not, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me," Gen. xxxii. 26.

I see no flocks of sheep, with sober assiduity, nibbling the grassy plains. No sportive lambs, with innocent gaiety, frisking along the sunny banks. Here are no stables for the generous steed, nor pastures for the lusty heifer. Nevertheless these watery regions are stocked with colonies of proper and peculiar inhabitants, who are clothed and accoutred in exact conformity to the clime; not in swelling wool or buoyant feathers, not in a flowing robe or a full-trimmed suit, but with as much compactness, and with as little superfluity as possible. They are clad, or rather sheathed *in scales*, which adhere closely to their bodies, and

are always laid in a kind of natural oil: than which apparel nothing can be more light, and at the same time, nothing more solid. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their flesh, it prevents the cold from coagulating their blood, and enables them to make their way through the waters with the utmost facility. They have each a curious instrument,* by which they increase or diminish their specific gravity; sink like lead, or float like a cork; rise to what height, or descend to what depth they please.

This is the abode of leviathan, hugest of living creatures; before whom the broad limbed elephant and the tall-necked camel are mere shrimps; a stretched-out promontory when he sleeps, a moving island when he swims; "making the sea to boil like a pot," when, unwieldily wallowing, he takes his prodigious pastime. Here the voracious shark, that tyrant of the fluid kingdoms, and assassin of the finny nations, roams and commits his ravages, imbrues his horrid fangs, and marks his rapid path with blood. Here dwelt that great, and greatly surprising fish, whose fierceness and avidity the almighty Sovereign employed, as his pursuivant, to arrest a fugitive prophet; whose ample jaws, or capacious entrails, were the dungeon to confine a rebellious subject, and the cabin to lodge a penitent offender; whose bulk, and strength, and speed, were a kind of vessel, transporting this convict to "the bottom of the mountains, and the bars of the earth," Jonah ii. 6. After the criminal was sufficiently chastised, and properly humbled, they served as a galley with oars to convey him safe to land.

In the same element resides (at least takes up part of his residence) that formidable monster, who is made without fear, and "has not his like upon earth." He esteemeth the pointed iron as straw, and ponderous brass as rotten wood. His heart is as hard as a piece of the nether-millstone, and his scales are a coat of impenetrable mail. Strength not to be resisted, much less to be subdued, lies intrenched in his sinewy neck.

* The air-bladder.

His eyes are like the eyelids of the opening day; and when he rolls those glaring orbs, there seems to be another morn risen on mid-noon. His teeth are terrible; jagged for rapine and edged with death. His throat is as a burning furnace; clouds of smoke are poured from his nostrils, and flakes of fire issue from his mouth. None, no not the most resolute, dares provoke him to the combat, or even stir him up from his slumbers. He laugheth at the shaking of the spear, "and sorrow marcheth in triumph before him,"* Job xli. 22. Whenever he raiseth himself, the mighty are afraid; wherever he advanceth, ruin is there. If a mere creature is capable of spreading such alarm and dread, how greatly is the Creator himself to be feared! who can turn the most harmless inhabitant of the ocean into a ravenous alligator, or a horrid crocodile! who can arm every reptile of the ground with all the force and rage of a lion!

It is impossible to enter on the muster-roll, those scaly herds, and that minuter fry, which graze the sea-weed or stray through the coral groves. They are innumerable as the sands which lie under them; countless as the waves which cover them. Here are uncouth animals, of monstrous shapes,† and amazing

* לפנין תרוץ ראכה. "Mœror," says Bochart, "præcedit tanquam metator et comes, tumidique ante ambulo regis. Terror and anguish are a kind of advanced guard to this monarch among the reptiles; or, they go before the monster, as the man bearing a shield went before the Philistine giant.—The original word occurs in no other part of the divine book. I cannot recollect any expression which so fully represents its meaning, as Homer's κοδιοων, or Xenophon's γαυριασθαι; both which are intended to describe the ardour and action of a high-mettled prancing steed.—The whole paragraph is a sketch of the crocodile's picture.

† *Monstrous shapes:*—Such as the sword-fish, whose upper jaw is lengthened into a strong and sharp sword, with which he sometimes ventures to attack ships, and is capable of piercing their sides though ribbed with oak. This may be called the champion of the waters; who, though never exceeding sixteen feet in length, yet, confiding in a weapon at once so trusty and so tremendous, scruples not to give battle even to the whale himself. The sun-fish has no tail; seems to *be all* head; and was it not for two fins, which act the part of oars, *would be one* entire round mass of flesh.—The polypus, remarkable *for its numerous* feet, and as many claws; by which it has the appear-

qualities:* Some that have been discovered by the inquisitive eye of man; and many more, that remain among the secrets of the hoary deep. Here are shoals and shoals, of various characters, and of the most diversified sizes; from the cumbrous whale, whose flouncings tempest the ocean, to the evanescent anchovy, whose substance dissolves in the smallest fricassee. Some, lodged in their pearly shells, and fattening on their rocky beds, seem attentive to no higher employ than that of imbibing moist nutriment. These, but a small remove from vegetable life, are almost rooted to the rocks on which they lie reposed; while others, active as the winged creation, and swift as an arrow from the Indian bow, shoot along the yielding flood, and range at large the spacious regions of the deep.

Here is the tortoise, who never moves but under her own portable pent-house: The lobster, which, whether he sleeps or wakes, is still in a state of defence, and clad in jointed armour: The oyster, a

ance of a mere insect, and seems fitted only to crawl. At the same time an excrescence, arising on the back, enables it to steer and pursue a steady course in the waves; so that it may pass under the twofold character of a sailor and a reptile.

* *Amazing qualities.*—Among these may be reckoned the torpedo, which benumbs on a sudden, and renders impotent, whatever fish it assaults; and, which is a more extraordinary property, strikes even the fisherman's arm, when he offers to lay hold on it, with a temporary deadness. By this means, it possesses the double advantage, of arresting its prey, and securing itself.—The cuttle-fish, furnished with a liquid magazine of a colour and consistence like ink; which, when pursued by an enemy, the creature emits and blackens the water. By this artifice, the foe is bewildered in the chase; and while the one vainly gropes in the dark, the other seizes the opportunity, and makes his escape.—The nautilus, whose shell forms a natural boat. The dexterous inhabitant unfurls a membrane to the wind, which serves him instead of a sail. He extends also a couple of arms, with which, as with two slender oars, he rows himself along. When he is disposed to dive, he strikes sail, and, without any apprehension of being drowned, sinks to the bottom. When the weather is calm, and he has an inclination to see the world, or take his pleasure, he mounts to the surface; and, self-taught in the art of navigation, performs his voyage without either chart or compass; is himself the vessel, the rigging, and the pilot.—*For a more copious illustration of this amusing and wonderful subject, see Nature Displayed*, vol. iii.

sort of living jelly, engarrisoned in the bulwark of native stone; with many other kind of sea-reptiles, or, as the Psalmist speaks, "things creeping innumerable," Psal. civ. 25. I am surprised at the variety of their figure, and charmed with the splendour of their colours. Unsearchable is the wisdom, and endless the contrivance, of the all-creating God! Some are rugged in their form, and little better than hideous in their aspect. Their shells seem to be the rude production of a disorderly jumble, rather than the regular effects of skill and design. Yet we shall find, even in these seeming irregularities, the nicest dispositions. These abodes, uncouth as they may appear, are adapted to the genius of their respective tenants, and exactly suited to their particular exigencies: neither the Ionic delicacy, nor the Corinthian richness, nor any other order of architecture, would have served their purposes half so well as this coarse and homely fabric.

Some, on the other hand, are extremely neat: Their structure is all symmetry and elegance. No enamel in the world is comparable to their polish. There is not a room of state, in all the palaces of Europe, so brilliantly adorned as the dining-room and the bed-chamber of the little fish that dwells in mother-of-pearl. Such a lovely mixture of red, and blue, and green, so delightfully staining the most clear and glittering ground, is no where else to be seen. The royal power may covet it, and human art may mimic it; but neither the one nor the other, nor both united, will ever be able to equal it.

But what I admire more than all their streaks, their spots, and their embroidery, is the extraordinary provision made for their safety. Nothing is more relishing and palatable than their flesh; nothing more heavy and sluggish than their motions. As they have no speed to escape, neither have they any dexterity to elude the foe. Were they naked or *unguarded*, they must be an easy prey to every free-*booter that* roams the ocean. To prevent this fatal

consequence, what is only clothing to other animals, is to them a clothing, a house, and a castle. They have a fortification, that grows with their growth, and is a part of themselves. By this means, they live secure amidst millions and millions of ravenous jaws: by this means, they are imparked, as it were, in their own shell; and, screened from every other assault, are reserved for the use and pleasure of mankind.

This is the birth-place of cod, the standing repast of Lent. This is the nursery of turbot, for its exquisite relish justly styled *the pheasant of the waters.* Hence comes the sturgeon, delicious even in pickle, and a regale for royal luxury; hence the flounders, dappled with reddish spots, and a supply for vulgar wants. Here dwell the mackarel, decked, when haled from their native element, richly decked with the most glossy dyes; the herring, whose back is mottled with azure, and his belly sleek with silver; the salmon, in plainer habit, but of larger substance, and higher esteem, than either or both the preceding. These, when shotten and lean, wander wildly up and down the vast abyss; when plump and delicate, they throng our creeks, and swarm in our bays—they repair to the shallows, or haunt the running streams. Who bids these creatures evacuate the shores, and disperse themselves into all quarters, when they become worthless and unfit for our service? Who rallies and recalls the undisciplined vagrants, as soon as they are improved into desirable food? Who appoints the very scene of our ambushes to be the place of their rendezvous, so that they come like volunteers to our nets? Surely, the furlough is signed, the summons issued, and the point of reunion settled, by a Providence ever indulgent to mankind, ever studious to treat us with dainties, and "load us with benefits," Psalm lxviii. 19.

We have wondered at* our Saviour's penetration and power:—his penetration, which, though the sea was at a distance, and walls intervened, discerned the

* See Letter VIII.

fish that had just swallowed a piece of money;—his power, which, without any delay, brought the lawless rambler, charged with the silver spoil, to Peter's hook. But is it not equally wonderful, to observe such innumerable multitudes of finny visitants annually approaching our shores and crowding our banks? which furnish our tables with a wholesome and delicate repast, at the same time that they yield to our nation a revenue, more certain, and no less considerable than the mines of Peru?

These approach, while those of enormous size and tremendous appearance abandon the shores. The latter might endanger the fisherman's safety, and would certainly scare away the valuable fish from our coasts. They are therefore restrained by an invisible hand, and abscond in the abysses of the ocean: Just as the wild beasts of the earth, impelled by the same overruling power, hide themselves in the recesses of the forest. A ship, infected with a pestilential distemper, is obliged to keep off at sea, and not permitted to enter the port till she has performed her quarantine. In like manner, these monsters of the deep, whose very business is destruction, are laid under a providential interdict; only with this very desirable difference, that, as their presence would always be pernicious, they are never suffered to come near—their quarantine is perpetual.

"Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee," Job xii. 7, 8. that the Lord is gracious; that his tender mercies are over all his works; that to us he is superabundantly and profusely good, having ordered all things in the surges of the ocean, as well as on the surface of the ground, for our rich accommodation, and for our greatest advantage.

One circumstance relating to the natives of the deep is very peculiar, and no less astonishing. As *they neither* sow nor reap, have neither the produce

of the hedges nor the gleanings of the field, they are obliged to plunder and devour one another for necessary subsistence. They are a kind of authorized banditti, that make violence and murder their professed trade. By this means prodigious devastations ensue; and without proper, without very extraordinary recruits, the whole race must continually dwindle, and at length be totally extinct. Were they to bring forth, like the most prolific of our terrestrial animals, a dozen only, or a score at each birth, the increase would be unspeakably too small for the consumption: the weaker species would be destroyed by the stronger; and, in time, the stronger must perish, even by their successful endeavours to maintain themselves. Therefore, to supply millions of assassins with their prey, and millions of tables with their food, yet not to depopulate the watery realms, the issue produced by every breeder is almost incredible. They spawn, not by scores or hundreds, but by thousands and by millions.* A single mother is pregnant with a nation. By which amazing, but most needful expedient, a periodical reparation is made, proportionable to the immense havock.

As the sea is peopled with animated inhabitants, it is also variegated with vegetable productions. Some soft as wool; others hard as stone. Some rise like a leafless shrub; some are expanded in the form of a net; some grow with their heads downward, and seem rather hanging on, than springing from, the juttings of the rocks. These may, with much greater propriety than the famous plantations of Semiramis, be called pensile gardens. But as my walk reached no farther than the purlieus of the ocean; as neither you nor I have ever taken a single turn among those submarine groves; as Moses, Joshua, and Jonah, the only

* Mr Petit found 342,144 eggs in the hard roe of a carp, sixteen inches long. Mr Lewenhoeck counted, in a cod of an ordinary size, 9,384,000 eggs. A fecundity perfectly amazing! but admirably adapted to the pressing exigencies of the watery world; admirably contrived for the *benefit and delight* of mankind.

writers that ever made the wonderful tour, intent upon more important themes, have left us no memoirs relating to this curious point; I shall not venture to advance any thing particular on the subject. Only one remark I would offer in general:—

The herbs and trees which flourish on the dry land, are maintained by the juices that permeate the soil and fluctuate in the air: For this purpose they are furnished with leaves to collect the one, and with roots to attract the other. Whereas the sea-plants, finding sufficient nourishment in the circumambient waters, have no occasion to detach a party of roots into the ground, and forage the earth for sustenance. Instead, therefore, of penetrating, they are but just tacked to the bottom; and adhere to some solid substance, only with such a degree of tenacity as may secure them from being tossed to and fro by the random agitation of the waves.

We see from this, and numberless other instances, what a diversity there is in the operations of the great Creator's hand. Yet every alteration is an improvement, and each new pattern has a peculiar fitness of its own. The same economy takes place, such a difference of administration, I mean, in his government of the rational world. In "chusing an heritage for his people," and assigning a condition to each of his servants, there is a great variety with respect to individuals, yet a perfect uniformity and complete harmony with respect to the whole. Some he calls out to a course of distinguished labours: They make an illustrious figure in life, and appear "as a city set on an hill," Matth. v. 14. Others he consigns over to obscurity: They are like the prophets whom good Obadiah hid in a cave, and are styled "his secret ones," Psal. lxxxiii. 3. Those, the cedars which stand conspicuous on the top of Lebanon; these, the violets which lie concealed at the foot of a brier.

St Paul was eminently qualified for busy scenes, and the most extensive services. He is introduced, therefore, into places of concourse. His ministry lies

amidst the most renowned and populous cities. Even his imprisonment at Rome seems to have been a providential expedient for fixing him, as it were, on the stage of public observation, and in the very centre of universal intelligence; where his preaching was like plunging a stone into the midst of a smooth canal, which affects not only the neighbouring parts of the surface, but spreads the floating circles over all the wide expanse. Whereas, the beloved John, being less fitted to bustle among a crowd, is sent into the unfrequented solitary island, there to indulge the flights of heavenly contemplation, and receive, with uninterrupted attention, the mysterious visions of God.—Job shall have thorns in his path; have the dunghill for his seat; and be exposed as a mark to all the arrows of tribulation. Solomon shall dip his foot in oil; shall be elevated on the throne of royalty, and surrounded with the most lavish caresses of heaven.

In all this seeming, this more than seeming contrariety, there is a display, not only of sovereign authority, but of consummate propriety. The great head of the church acts like a judicious general, and appoints such a station to each of his soldiers as corresponds with the ability he gives. He acts like the most skilful physician, and prescribes such a remedy for all his patients, as is most nicely suited to their respective cases. He knows the precise point of time, the particular place of abode, the peculiar circumstances of condition, which are most proper for each and every of his children; and, like a tender as well as unerring father, what he knows to be best, that he constantly allots. I said, like a general, like a physician, like a father. But the comparison is low; the language is inexpressive. Christ is all that is implied in these relations, and unspeakably more. O that we may rejoice in the superintendency of such a Saviour! and not only resign ourselves to his will, but thank him for managing the helm; thank him for steering our course through the changes of time and the *uncertainties of futurity*; since, whatever our froward

and petulant passions may suggest, the Lord's ways are so far from being unequal, that they have all possible fitness and propriety—they are ordered "in number, weight, and measure."

All is so very different from the prospects which lately presented themselves, that I can hardly forbear asking, Whether I am not translated into a new world? Where are the waving hillocks covered with the Creator's bounty? where are the fruitful valleys made vocal with his praise? No cultured field, no opening blossom, not so much as a green leaf appears. None of my late entertainments remain, but only the cooling zephyrs; which are no longer perfumed with the breath of flowers, but impregnated with the freshness of the ocean. Yet though all those lovely landscapes are withdrawn—though the gurgling fountain is silenced, and the blooming garden lost—I am not far from the origin, both of the odours which exhale from the one, and of the crystal which flows from the other. I am now upon the margin of that grand reservoir which supplies the country with its fertility, and the parterre with its beauty. The sea is the inexhaustible cistern of the universe! The air and sun constitute the mighty engine, which works without intermission to raise the liquid treasure; while the clouds serve as so many aqueducts, to convey the genial stores along the atmosphere, and distribute them, at seasonable periods, and in regular proportions, through all the regions of the globe.

I question whether the united application of mankind could, with their utmost skill, and with all possible percolations, fetch a single drop of perfectly sweet water * from this unmeasurable pit of brine. Yet the action of the solar heat draws off every hour,

* I have not forgotten what was lately affirmed in our public papers, that a certain ingenious gentleman, I think in the city of Durham, had found out the art of sweetening sea-water. What he produced might probably approve itself to the taste, and not be without its usefulness: yet I cannot but query, whether it will be found to have all those fine, *balmy, salutiferous* qualities, which distinguish and recommend the *rain-water; which* has been exhaled by the kindly warmth of the sun,

every minute, millions and millions of tons, in vaporous exhalations; which, being skilfully parcelled out, and securely lodged in "the bottles of heaven,"† are sent abroad, sweetened and refined, without any brackish tincture or the least bituminous sediment: sent abroad upon the wings of the wind, to distil in dews, or pour themselves in rain; to ooze from the orifices of fountains; to trickle along the veins of rivulets; to rise in the cavities of wells; to roll in many a headlong torrent from the sides of mountains; to flow in copious streams amidst the bosom of burning deserts, and through the heart of populous kingdoms, in order to refresh and fertilize, to beautify and enrich, every soil, in every clime.

How amiable is the goodness, and how amazing is the power, of the world's adorable Maker! How amiable his goodness, in distributing so largely what is so absolutely necessary and so extensively beneficial! That water, without which we can scarce perform any business or enjoy any comfort, should be every one's property; should spring up from the soil; should drop down from the clouds; should stream by our houses; should take a journey from the ends of the earth, and the extremities of the ocean, on purpose to serve us! How amazing his power, that this boundless mass of fluid salt, so intolerably nauseous to the human taste, should be the original spring which deals out every palatable draught to mankind, and quenches the thirst of every animal! Doubtless, the power by which this is effected can extract comfort from our afflictions, advantage from our calamities, and "make all things work together for our good," Rom. viii. 28.

Vast and various are the advantages which we receive from the liquid element; vast, as its unbounded

has been filtrated by passing and repassing through the regions of the air; has been clarified in the highest and purest tracts of the atmosphere; has been further refined and perfected by the searching agency of the winds. I should very much wonder, if the puny alembic could equal this grand apparatus of nature.

† So the clouds are elegantly styled in Job xxxviii. 37.

extent; various, as its ever mutable surface. The sweet waters glide along the earth in spacious currents, which not only exhilarate the adjacent country by their humid train and exhaling moisture, but, by giving a brisk impulse to the air, prevent the unwholesome stagnation of their own vapours. They pass by opulent cities, and, receiving all their filth, rid them of a thousand nuisances, which, when once committed to these fluid scavengers, are as effectually secreted as if they were buried ever so deep in the earth. Yet, though they condescend to so mean an employ, they are fitted for more honourable services. They enter the gardens of a prince, and compose some of the most delightful ornaments of the place. They glitter upon the eye as they float in the ample canal. They amuse the imagination as they ascend in curious *jets d'eau*. They yield a nobler entertainment, as, forming themselves into sheets of sloping silver, they fall in graceful or in grand cascades. If, instead of beautifiers, we think proper to make use of them as drudges, they ply at our mills, they toil incessantly at the wheel, and, by working the hugest engines, take upon themselves an unknown share of our fatigue, and save us a proportionable degree of expense.

So forcibly they act when collected, and most surprisingly they insinuate when detached. They throw themselves into the body of a plant, they penetrate the minutest of its organized tubes, and find a passage through meanders, too small for the eye to discern, too numerous and intricate even for imagination to follow. How difficultly does a labourer that serves the mason push his way up the rounds of a ladder, bending under the burden of mortar on his head! while these servants in the employ of nature carry their load to a much greater height, and climb with the utmost ease, even without the assistance of steps or stairs. They convey the nutrimental stores of vegetation, from the lowest fibres that are plunged into the soil, to the very topmost twigs that wave amidst *the clouds*. They are the caterers for the vegetable

world, or (if I may be allowed the expression) the sutlers, which attend the whole host of plants, to furnish them with seasonable refreshment and necessary provision. By means of which "the trees of the Lord are full of sap, even the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted," Psalm civ. 16.; and, notwithstanding their vast elevation and prodigious diffusion—though they are abandoned by man, and deprived of all cultivation—yet not a single branch is destitute of leaves, nor a single leaf of moisture.

Besides the salutary, cleanly, and serviceable circulation of the rivers, the sea has a libration no less advantageous, and much more remarkable. Every day this immense collection of waters, for the space of five or six hours, flows towards the land, and after a short pause retires again to its inmost caverns; taking up nearly the same time in its retreat as it required for its access. How great is the power which sets the whole fluid world in motion! which protrudes to the shores such an inconceivable weight of waters, without any concurrence from the winds, frequently in direct opposition to all their force! How gracious also is the Providence which bids the mighty element perform its tumbling revolutions with the most exact punctuality! Was it suffered to advance with a lawless and unlimited swell, it might sweep over kingdoms, and deluge whole continents. Was it irregular and uncertain in its approaches, navigation would be at a stand, and trade become precarious. But, being constant at its stated periods, and never exceeding its appointed bounds, it creates no alarm to the country, and affords very considerable aids to traffic.

The tide, at its flow, rushing up our large rivers, clears and deepens the passage, in many places spreads a copious flood, where a dry and empty waste lay before. Is the sailor returned from his voyage, and waiting at the mouth of the channel? The flux is ready to convey his vessel to the very doors of the owner, and without any hazard of striking on the rocks, or being fastened in the sands. Has the mer-

chant freighted his ship? would he have it transferred to the ocean? The reflux tenders its service, and bears away the load, with the utmost expedition, and with equal safety. Behold, O man! how greatly thou art beloved, how highly favoured by thy Maker! In what part of his works has he forgotten or overlooked thy welfare? Shew me a creature, point out a spot, in the formation or disposition of which he has not been mindful of thy interests? "He has made thee to have dominion over the works of his hands, and has put all things in subjection under thy feet. All sheep and oxen, the fowls of the air, and the fishes;" yea, and the surges "of the sea," Psalm viii. 6—8. are subservient to thy benefit. Even these, wild and impetuous as they are, yield their willing backs to receive thy load; and, like an indefatigable beast of burden, carry it to the place which thou shalt nominate.

What preserves this vast flood in a state of perpetual purity? It is the universal sewers, into which are discharged the refuse and filth of the whole world. That which would defile the land, and pollute the air, is transmitted to the ocean, and neither mischief nor inconvenience ensue. Those swarms of locusts which, while living, were a plague to Pharaoh by their loathed intrusion, and, when dead, might have caused a more dreadful plague by their noisome stench, swept into the sea, were neither pestilential nor offensive. How then is this receptacle of every nuisance kept clean? Why does it not contract a noxious taint, and diffuse a destructive contagion? such as would render it a grave to the aquatic, and bane to the terrestrial animals? It is owing, partly to its incessant motion, partly to its saline quality. By the one, it is secured from any internal principle of corruption; by the other, it works itself clear from every adventitious defilement.

A directory this, and a pattern for me! Thus may divine grace, like the penetrating power of salt, cure the depravity of my heart, and rectify the disorders *of my temper*! season my words, and make all my

conversation savoury! Thus may a continual course of activity, in my secular and my sacred vocation, prevent the pernicious effects of indolence! Let me daily exercise, or be attempting to exercise, the graces of Christianity, lest faith become feeble, lest hope contract dimness, and charity wax cold.

Now the tide begins to flow. Wave rises upon wave, and billow rolls over billow. Nothing can divert, nothing retard its progress, no, not for a moment. Though Canutus be in the way,* though his royal authority and strict prohibition, nay, though all the forces of his kingdom oppose, it will never discontinue the advancing swell, till it has reached the destined point. So may I always abound in communion with God, or in beneficence to men, resigning one religious or charitable employ only to enter upon another, and be thus pressing forward, still pressing forward, to the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus; differing from these regular vicissitudes of the ocean only in one particular, that my endeavours never ebb, my soul never draws back: Since this would be, if temporary, to my grievous loss; if final, to my aggravated perdition.

* Alluding to a memorable and instructive story recorded of King Canutus, who, probably without having read, had nevertheless thoroughly learned, that excellent lesson of Horace:

Regum timendorum in proprios greges,
Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis.

Some of his abject and designing flatterers had the impious assurance to tell him, "his power was more than human." To convince them of their folly, and rebuke them for their falsehood, he ordered his chair of state to be placed on the extremity of the shore, just as the tide began to flow. Here he took his seat, in the presence of the parasites, and many other attendants. Then, with all that dignity of air, and severity of accent, which sovereign authority knows how to assume, he said, "Thou sea, the land on which I sit is mine; nor has any one dared to invade my rights, or disobey my commands, without suffering the deserved punishment. I charge thee, therefore, on pain of my highest displeasure, not to enter these territories, nor touch the feet of England's monarch."—When the rude waves made bold to enter on the forbidden ground; nay, when those uncourtly things presumed to rush upon the royal seat, and even to dash his majesty's person, he started from his throne, and bid every beholder observe the impotence of earthly kings; bid them remember, that he alone is worthy of the name, whom winds, and *waves, and universal nature* obey.

Consider the sea in another capacity, and it connects the remotest realms of the universe, by facilitating an intercourse between their respective inhabitants. What short-sighted beings are mankind! how extremely superficial their views! how unavoidable therefore their frequent mistakes! The ancients looked upon this bottomless deep as an unpassable gulf: If our forefathers were so egregiously mistaken in this instance, let us not too peremptorily pronounce upon any difficult or mysterious point, lest succeeding generations, or a more enlightened state, should cover us with the double confusion of childish ignorance and foolish conceit.

We have clearly demonstrated, and happily experienced, the very reverse of that grey-headed surmise to be true. The ocean, instead of being a bar of separation, is the great bond of union. For this purpose, it is never exhausted, though it supplies the whole firmament with clouds, and the whole earth with rains; nor ever overflows, though all the rivers in the universe are perpetually augmenting its stores, and pouring in their tributary floods.—By means of this element we travel farther than birds of the strongest pinion fly, and discover tracts which the "vulture's eye has never seen," Job xxviii. 7. We make a visit to nations that lie drowned in their midnight slumbers, when every industrious person on this part of the globe is bestirring himself in all the hurry of business. We cultivate an acquaintance with the sun-burnt Negro and the shivering Icelander. We cross the flaming line, we penetrate the frozen pole, and wing our way even round the world.

This is the great vehicle of commerce.—Not to mention the floating castles, which contain whole armies, which bear the thunder, the fiery tempests, and all the dreadful artillery of war; what a multitude of ships, of the largest dimensions and most prodigious burden, are continually passing and repassing this universal thoroughfare! ships that are freighted, not with sacks, but with harvests of corn; that carry not

pipes, but vintages of wine; that are laden, not with bars of iron, blocks of marble, or wedges of gold, but with whole quarries of massy stone, and whole mines of ponderous metal! All which, lodged in these volatile storehouses, and actuated by the breath of heaven, are wafted to the very ends of the earth; wafted, enormous and unwieldy as they are, more expeditiously than the light berlin bowls along the road; almost as speedily as the nimble-footed roe bounds over the hills.*

Astonishing ordination of eternal wisdom! yet most graciously contrived for the benefit of mankind!—I can hardly satisfy my view in beholding this rolling chaos; I can never cease my admiration in contemplating its amazing properties.—That an element, so unstable and fugitive, should bear up such an immense weight as would bend the firmest floors, or burst the strongest beams! That the thin and yielding air should drive on, with so much facility and speed, bodies of such excessive bulk as the strength of a legion would be unable to move! That the air and the water, acting in conjunction, should carry to the distance of many thousand miles, what the united force of men and machines could scarcely drag a single yard!—Puny and despicable are our attempts; but great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! "If thou wilt work," says the prophet, who or what "shall let it?" Isa. xliii. 13. Neither the meanness of the instrument, nor the greatness of the event. A sling and a stone shall lay the gigantic bravo in the dust, 1 Sam. xvii. 50. An ox-goad shall do more execution than a battery of cannon, Judges iii. 31. Even "a worm shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff," Isa. xli. 14, 15. God All-Sufficient is his name, and out

* A ship, under a brisk and steady gale, will sail at the rate of 216 miles in 24 hours; persevering, if the wind continues favourable, in the same rapid career for several days together: A course which, considering both its swiftness and duration, cannot be equalled by the ablest horse, perhaps not by the nimblest creature that treads the ground.

of weakness he maketh his strength perfect. O that we, my dear Aspasio, that I especially, may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Then, as the light air is made to act with a more forcible impulse than the most vigorous engines; as the fluid water is made to sustain more ponderous loads than the most substantial works of masonry; so we, who in ourselves are nothing but impotence, shall be enabled to triumph over the legions of hell, and tread down all the temptations of the world.

How are the mariners conducted through this fluid common, than which nothing is more wide, and nothing more wild? Here is no track to be followed, no posts of direction to be consulted, nor any shepherd's hut where the wandering traveller may ask his way. —Are they guided by a pillar of fire in the night, or a moveable cloud in the day, as the sons of Jacob and Joseph were escorted through the eastern deserts? No; but by a mean, contemptible, and otherwise worthless fossil.—The apostle James mentions it as a very observable fact, that the "ships, which are so great, and driven of fierce winds, yet are turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth," James iii. 4. Is it not equally wonderful, that they should be led through such a pathless and unmeasurable waste by so small an expedient as the intervention of the loadstone? * Till this surprising mineral was discovered, and its properties were improved, navigation lay in its cradle; was at best a mere infant, that crept timorously along the coasts; was obliged to keep within sight of the shores, and, if driven out beyond the narrow sphere of her landmarks, could neither ascertain her situation nor pursue her voyage. But this guide, when every beacon

* I am aware that other expedients are used for shaping a proper course on the ocean, such as making observations from the sun by mathematical instruments. But these, I believe, are only subordinate aids to the needle. The grand regulator is the magnet. I have heard an experienced sailor declare, he would rather be without his quadrant, than without his compass.

on the top of the hills is vanished from the acutest ken; where nothing but skies are seen above, and seas alone appear below—this guide points out the proper passage. This communicates an intelligence which shines clear in the thickest darkness, and remains steady in the most tempestuous agitations. This has given, not indeed birth, but maturity to navigation, and turned her swaddling-bands into wings. This has imboldened her to launch into the heart of the ocean, and enabled her to range from pole to pole.

Thus does God, both in the operations of nature and the administrations of providence, accomplish the most important ends by the most inconsiderable means. When the formidable Sisera is to be cut off, the blow shall be given, not by some puissant champion, but by the hand of a woman, Judg. iv. 9. When Jericho is to be demolished, those impregnable fortifications shall fall, not beneath the stroke of battering engines, but before the sound of ram's horns, Josh. vi. 3. When 100,000 Midianites are to be routed, the Lord of Hosts will gain this signal victory, not by numerous legions completely armed, but by a handful of Israelites, accoutred only with trumpets, lamps, and pitchers, Judg. vii. 19. Who would have thought, that from the root of Jesse, a root out of a dry ground, should arise that great tree, which "stretches her boughs unto the sea, and her height unto the heavens, and her branches unto the ends of the earth?" That the despised Galilean and the carpenter's son should be the Saviour of the world, and the Heir of all things? Nay, that a person humbled like the meanest of slaves, and executed like the vilest of malefactors; nailed to a cross, and laid prostrate among the dead; that he should restore life and immortality to ruined sinners; should open the gates of grace and glory on lost mankind? That a few illiterate creatures, taken from the barge, the oar, and the net, should confute philosophers, and convert kings; should overthrow the strong-holds of idolatry, and plant Christianity on its ruins! This is a circumstance

which, though a stumbling-block to some people, has considerably strengthened my faith. It is perfectly agreeable to the Almighty's manner. It is (if I may so speak) the distinguishing turn of his hand, and the peculiar style of his works. Whence does he raise the charmingly beauteous flower? whence the magnificent myriads of forest oaks? whence the boundless and inestimable stores of harvest? From principles which bear not the least proportion to their effects.—Besides, this most emphatically speaks the God. It "shews the lighting down of his arm," Isa. xxx. 30.; and absolutely precludes all the pretensions of human arrogance or finite power. It appropriates the honour to that supreme Agent, before whom the easy and the arduous are both alike. All men that see it must confess, This hath God done.

Through this channel are imported to our island the choice productions, and the peculiar treasures, of every nation under heaven. So that we can breakfast upon a dissolution of the American kernel,* and see the rich nutrimental liquor froth in our cups, without ever tempting the foaming brine. We can steep the delicately flavoured Chinese leaf in the waters of our own well; or spend the afternoon in our own parlour, and be regaled with an infusion of the finely scented Arabian berry. We can season the friendly bowl with the juices of the orange, or refresh our clammy palate with the pulp of the tamarind, without feeling that fervent heat which imparts such a poignant relish to the former, without suffering those scorching beams which give a fever-cooling virtue to the latter. We can pile upon our salvers a pyramid of Italian figs; fill the interstices with the sky-dried raisins of Malaga; and form a summit for the inviting structure with the pistacia nut of Aleppo. By this means the eastern spices exhale their odours on our tables, and the western canes transfuse their sweetness into our viands. We clothe our bodies with the vegetable

* Called the cocoa, which affords the principal ingredient of chocolate, and grows on a small tree in America.

fleeces of the south,† and line our apparel with warm furry spoils from the north. We can wear the pearl polished in the abysses of the Persian Gulf; and walk on the carpets manufactured in the dominions of the Great Mogul; yet neither expose ourselves to the rage of boisterous seas, nor the more dreaded treachery of barbarous people. In short, by this grand and beneficial expedient of navigation, every tide conveys into our ports the wealth of the remotest climes, and brings the abundance of the universe to be unladen on our quays. London becomes a mart of nations; and almost every private house in the kingdom is embellished or accommodated from the four quarters of the globe.

Almost every private house—Is not this more like rhetorical flourish than real truth? Are not all the advantages I have mentioned the peculiar portion of the rich? Is not the sea, like high life and the gay world, somewhat capricious and partial? bestowing lavishly her favours on the wealthy, at the same time that she neglects the needy? Quite the reverse. Like her most exalted yet most condescending Creator, she is no respecter of persons. She deals out her liberalities to all: to the wealthy, such as are suitable to their circumstances; to the indigent, such as are best adapted to their condition. If she ornaments the bodies of the first, she employs the hands of the last; furnishes these with useful labour, those with elegant accommodations. What a multitude of industrious people acquire a livelihood by preparing the commodities intended for exportation! and what a multitude of dexterous artificers maintain their families by manufacturing the wares imported from abroad!

It is reckoned a valuable species of beneficence to provide proper work for the poor. This withdraws them from many temptations, and preserves them from much wickedness. It hinders them from being a burden to themselves, and a nuisance to the public. They might otherwise be idle, and as vermin on the

† Cotton, which is a sort of wool encompassing the seed of a tree.

body politic; or even mutinous, and as vipers in the bowels of the nation: whereas, by exerting themselves in a due subordination, and with becoming diligence, they are the very sinews of the community; or like the grand wheel in the machine of state, whose incessant activity distributes plenty, and pours innumerable conveniencies through the whole. What a master then, or rather what a mistress is the sea! how extensive her correspondence, and how large her demand for workmen! Into what branch of trade does she not enter? What kind of ingenious science, or useful toil, does she not befriend? How many millions of honest but needy persons are engaged in her service? and how amply are they repaid for their pains? "They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." They also that dwell among their own people, and abide in the villages, even they enjoy the bounty, and share the advantages of the ocean. For, though it is false philosophy to suppose the waters themselves strained through subterranean passages into the inland countries; yet it is an undeniable truth, that their beneficial effects are transfused into every town, every hamlet, and every cottage.

Surely the inhabitants of our isle have reason to turn the prediction of Moses, concerning the tribe of Joseph, into a devout and grateful acknowledgment: —"Blessed of the Lord is* our land. Blessed with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and with the deep that coucheth beneath. With the precious things brought forth by the sun, and with the precious things thrust forth by the moon. With the chief things of the ancient mountains, and with the precious things of the everlasting hills; and with the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof,"

* *Is*, (so I would translate the original,) not *be*; in the predictive, not precatory form. This implies a fulness of faith, and distinguishes prophecy from prayer; best suits the extraordinary illumination of *Moses*; and does most honour to the omniscient Spirit.

Deut. xxxiii. 13—16. May we also enjoy "the good will of him who dwelt in the bush," Deut. xxxiii. 16.; and the grace of him who hung on the tree! May the eternal God be our refuge, and his everlasting arms underneath both us and our interests! Happy then wilt thou be, thrice happy, O England! Thy temporal advantages and thy spiritual privileges considered, it may be truly said, "Who," or what nation "is like unto thee?"

This for my country; now let me wish for myself:

> God of all worlds! source and supreme of things!
> From whom all life, from whom duration springs!
> Intense, O! let me for thy glory burn,
> Nor fruitless view my days and months return.
> Give me with wonder at thy works to glow,
> To grasp thy vision, and thy truths to know:
> O'er time's tempestuous sea to reach thy shore,
> And live, and sing, where time shall be no more.

You see, Aspasio, I have been studying the volume of nature; endeavouring to read its capital characters, and learn some of its instructive lessons. The sea has been the page; but how superficial is my perusal, and no less scanty my knowledge. Little, very little have I seen or conceived, relating to those works of wonder which the vast unfathomable deep contains; the plants it produces and the creatures it nourishes; its stupenduous rocks and subterranean caves; the heaps of pearl, which are its native growth; and the loads of gold, which it has gained by shipwreck. So superficial are my views of Christ; so scanty is my acquaintance with the gospel.

You, I presume, are sitting at the feet of that sublime Teacher, and attending to the dictates of his mouth, in "whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. Let me promise myself a communication of your thoughts, as I have freely transmitted a specimen of mine. And I will make no scruple to acknowledge the superiority of the exchange that I receive.

Χρυσεα χαλκειων, εκατομβοι εννεαβοιων.

Or, as the eloquent Isaiah speaks: "For brass you

will bring gold, and for iron you will bring silver," Isa. lx. 17.; rendering me, by this intercourse, your more obliged, though it is scarce possible for me to be more than I already am, your affectionate

THERON.

P. S.—M. Paschal, who was remarkably fond of brevity, makes an odd excuse for transgressing, on a particular occasion, his favourite rule. He entreats his friend to pardon the unusual length of his epistle, by assuring him, "that he had not time to make it shorter." I cannot, it must be confessed, adopt this philosopher's apology. For I have purposely lengthened my letter, with a view of setting, in this one circumstance, a pattern for my Aspasio.

LETTER X.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—I THANK you for your letter, because it entertains and improves me: I thank you for your postscript, because it is my encouragement and my apology. I am set down to write, with a copious stock of materials. It will be far more difficult to contract than to enlarge. I must therefore acknowledge myself obliged to your candour for assigning me the easier task. That prolixity which, in others, might be ungenteel and faulty, is in me an act of complaisance, and matter of duty.

Though absent from you, I went with you in your late ramble. Your descriptive pen has made me partaker of the ideal delight; may divine grace enable me to share in the spiritual improvement! When you displayed the beauties of the morn, breaking forth from the obscurity of night; when you adopted that noble aspiration from our philosophic poet, I could not forbear adding: "Thus may the gracious God, who commands the light to shine out of the midnight *darkness*, shine into our hearts, and give that incom-

parably glorious knowledge, the knowledge of his blessed Self! which, though discernible through all the tracts of creation, and derivable from every work of his almighty hand, yet nowhere beams forth with such complete and such amiable lustre as in the person of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Here we behold all the sublime perfections of the Deity, not only manifested with inimitable splendour, but operating for our own advantage. We behold them, as Job speaks, "for ourselves," Job xix. 27.; and cannot but receive inexpressible refreshment and joy from the view.

When you walked beneath the shade of those huge, horrid, and enormous cliffs, both amused and alarmed at their stupendous magnitude and frightful irregularity; when you cast your eye upon the wide expanded surface of the ocean; when you surveyed the far more unmeasurable arches of the sky, and meditated, in that awful solitude, on the wildest and most magnificent appearances of nature—I felt the same kind of devout astonishment with yourself. While the soul was wrapt in "pensive stillness, and pleasing dread," methought I heard a voice, or something like a voice, from the silent spheres, as well as from the sounding seas. It seemed to echo back, what the mighty angel whom John saw flying in the midst of heaven once proclaimed: "Worship him, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water," Rev. xiv. 7. "Worship him, who stretched out that azure pavilion with such amazing grandeur; who measured yonder world of waters in the hollow of his hand; and before whom this immense range of mountainous cliffs is but as dust upon the scale."

When you described the dismal situation of a wretch, exposed on the edges of the tremendous precipice, hanging over the ragged rocks and the unfathomable gulf, and cleaving only to a slender treacherous breaking bough; how heartily did I join in your adoring acknowledgments to that kind, interposing, blessed hand, which rescued us both from an infinitely more threatening and dreadful danger!

rescued us as slaves from the dominion of the devil; snatched us as brands from the inextinguishable burnings; and bid us, (O marvellous superabundant goodness!) bid us possess the liberty of righteousness, —bid us inherit the kingdom of heaven.

When you mention the past indolence, and the present fervour of your prayers, I could not forbear reiterating my praises to God on your behalf. This is a proof, my dear Theron, that you are going in the way everlasting; for it is written, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them," Jer. xxxi. 9. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in your heart; for what saith the Scripture? "I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication," Zech. xii. 10. And our Lord himself mentions this as the indication of a true conversion: "Behold he prayeth," Acts ix. 11. Had not Saul prayed before? Yes; and made long prayers too. But he never, till that instant, was sensible of his undone and damnable condition; never cried to God from the depths of his distress, or from the depths of his heart; nor ever solicited the throne of grace, in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ. His prayers, till then, were somewhat like the motes which fluctuate to and fro in the air, without any vigorous impulse or any certain aim; but, in that hour, they were like the arrow which springs from the strained bow, and, quick as lightning, flies to the mark.

I was pleased to find you, in the process of your letter, insensibly forgetting the narrative, and so engaged by the subject, that you spoke not as the relator but as the beholder. Thus may we always be affected, when we study the oracles of truth—study them, not as cold unconcerned critics, who are only to judge of their meaning, but as persons deeply interested in all they contain; who are particularly addressed in every exhortation, and directed by every precept; whose are the promises, and to whom belong the precious privileges. When we are enabled thus *to realize* and appropriate the contents of that invalu-

able book, then we shall taste the sweetness, and feel the power of the Scriptures. Then we shall know, by happy experience, that our divine Master's words are not barely sounds and syllables, but "they are spirit, and they are life," John vi. 63.

I was still more agreeably entertained with your picture of commerce, and of the advantages we receive from navigation. One advantage, however, I can specify, which is greater than any, greater than all you have celebrated; an advantage, which will endear and ennoble navigation, so long as the sun and moon endure. The gospel, my dear friend, the glorious gospel, came to our island through this channel. The volume that comprises it, and the preacher that published it, both were imported by shipping. And may we not say, with the enraptured Isaiah, "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace, that bring good tidings of good, that publish salvation, that say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth?" Isa. lii. 7. It is pleasant to hear their voice, pleasant to contemplate their message, and pleasant even to behold the ground on which they trod, or the very waves over which they sailed. This made the holy prophet rejoice in spirit, when he foresaw the extensive spread of his Master's glory, and the certain commencement of our happiness. This put into his mouth that affectionate and congratulatory address, which, in a very particular manner, is directed to us and our countrymen: "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the ends of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; ye isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains! Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands!" Isa. xlii. 10—12.

We read in Ezekiel, of the most magnificent fleet that ever ploughed the seas. The masts were of cedar, Ezek. xxvii. 5. &c. and the benches of ivory,

Fine linen, beautified with embroidery, floated to the winds, and formed the sails. Blue and purple rigged the vessel, and clothed the meanest mariner. Let us suppose, that the freight of this splendid navy was proportioned in value to its sumptuous tackling. Yet how poor, how despicable were either, were both, if estimated with the treasures of the gospel; those divine treasures which spring from the imputation of our Redeemer's righteousness, and which have much the same kindly influence on religious practice, as navigation, with all her improvements, has upon traffic! Give me leave to confirm this assertion, by selecting a few instances, and applying them in a few interrogatories.

One of the benefits proceeding from the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is pardon: pardon, not partial, but complete; a pardon of each sin, be it ever so heinous; a pardon of all sins, be they ever so numerous. For thus saith God the Lord, who sent both his prophets and apostles, preaching peace by "Jesus Christ, I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me," Jer. xxxiii. 8. To learn the desirable nature of this blessing, let us step back into the annals of history, and attend a traitorous unhappy nobleman to his vindictive exit. His body is demanded by the ministers of justice. Reluctant and trembling he is conducted to the scaffold. There the alarmed criminal sees the mourning block, sees the glittering axe, sees the coffin prepared for his corpse, sees thousands of anxious spectators, waiting, with eager looks and throbbing hearts, the fearful catastrophe. In a word, he sees death advancing, with all the solemnities of horror and woe. Time elapses. The preparatory ceremonies are dispatched. The fatal moment is arrived. No longer respite can be allowed. He must submit to immediate execution. Accordingly he prostrates himself to receive the stroke; but, seized with new terrors at the poised axe and approaching blow, he starts from the dangerous posture. Again he bends,

and again snatches his neck from the impending edge. A third time he lifts his pale countenance to the pitying crowds and departing light. Once more he bows to the block, and once more raises his head, in wishful expectation of the royal clemency. Had a messenger appeared at the critical instant, with a shout of joy upon his tongue, and a sealed pardon in his hand, O how transporting the news! inexpressibly welcome the favour!—What was denied to his passionate desires, denied to the importunate solicitations of his friends, is freely offered to us in the gospel of Christ; a pardon of infinitely higher consequence, which obliterates millions and millions of rebellious acts; which extends its blessed effects, not merely through the little span of life, but beyond the gates of the grave—beyond the boundaries of time—through all the ages of eternity.

How unfathomable is that immense flood on which my Theron lately exercised his contemplation! The toiling plummets, with all their length of cordage, are unable to find a bottom. Were the hugest millstones, or the highest towers, or the most spacious cities, cast into that prodigious gulf, they would be totally overwhelmed, and irrecoverably lost. Therefore the inspired prophet, to shew the boundless extent of the divine mercies in Jesus Christ, and to denote the fulness of their pardon who are cleansed in the Redeemer's blood, hath illustrated both by this grand similitude: "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Mic. vii. 19.; not one, or a few, but all their sins; not barely behind thy back, but into the sea; and not into the shallow parts, but in the very depths of the ocean; so that they shall never rise up in judgment—never be taken notice of, no, nor ever be remembered any more.

With an act of total indemnity, let us join a thorough restoration to favour. If the wrath of an earthly king be as "the roaring of a lion," Prov. xix. 12. how much more tremendous is his indignation who is able to cast both *body and soul* into hell! If the favour of an

earthly sovereign be "as dew upon the grass," how much more desirable and delightful his loving-kindness, whom all things in heaven and earth obey! By the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we are freed from all foreboding apprehensions of the former, and established in the comfortable possession of the latter. The gospel renews and ratifies that joyful proclamation of the angelic host, "Peace on earth, and good-will to men," Luke ii. 14. God is not only pacified toward believers, but well pleased with them in his dear Son. They are the objects of his complacential delight, and he rejoices over them to do them good.

Nay, they are made children, "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 18.; "and if sons, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. The chief captain mentioned in the Acts, purchased his freedom of the imperial city Rome with a great sum of money, Acts xxii. 28. If such a little transient immunity was so valuable in his esteem, who can express the worth, who can conceive the dignity, of this divine adoption? Yet it belongs to those who receive the gospel, and are interested in Christ. They have access to the Omnipotent Being, such free and welcome access as a beloved child to an indulgent father. To him they may fly for aid in every difficulty; and from him obtain a supply in all their wants. God, as the sacred charter runs, "is their God." All his lovely, all his adorable perfections, are their glorious inheritance, and exceeding great reward. That eternal power, to which nothing is impossible, exerts itself as their guard; and that unerring wisdom, from which nothing is concealed, acts as their guide. His very justice is no longer an incensed adversary, demanding vengeance or meditating destruction; but a faithful guarantee, to provide for the punctual execution of the Redeemer's treaty, and their complete enjoyment of its various blessings. What a privilege *is this*! Rather, what a cluster of privileges is here! *Weigh* the kingdoms of the world; cast all the

glories of them into the scale; and they will be found, when compared with these divine prerogatives, emptier than the bubble that bursts, lighter than the spark that expires.

In the gospel are given exceeding great and precious promises: Of such value, that they were procured by the blood of Christ; of such certainty, that they are ratified by the oath of Jehovah, Heb. vi. 17. So durable, that though "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the grass, this word of our God abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23.; so efficacious, that there are no such cordials to revive our fainting, and no such bulwarks to secure our endangered souls. With these the Bible is as richly replenished as the clear midnight sky is bespangled with stars. They "are all yea and amen," consigned over as a sure unalienable portion, "to them that are in Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. i. 20.

Another benefit, given in consequence of the Redeemer's righteousness, is the sanctifying Spirit. A most comprehensive blessing this! Our Saviour intimates, that it includes every heavenly gift, is an assemblage of all good things.* How singular a comfort must it be to blind Bartimeus to have his eyes opened, and behold the all-cheering light of the sun! Mark x. 52. So, and far more comfortable, are the enlightening influences of the blessed Spirit, when they shine upon the wretched creature who sits in darkness and the shadow of death. How peculiar a mercy for the impure and abhorred leper, to be healed of his inveterate disease! to feel the soothing sensations of ease, where sores rankled and pain raged! Instead of enfeebling languors and loathsome deformity, vigour braces his limbs, and comeliness blooms in his countenance, Matt. viii. 3. Equally benign, and equally salubrious, is the agency of the divine Spirit on our depraved, polluted, sensual minds. How signal was the recovery, and how welcome the change, when that unhappy creature,

* *Compare* Matth. vii. 11. with Luke xi. 13.

so wildly agitated by a mischievous demon, was reinstated in the peaceful possession of himself and his faculties! when, instead of unnaturally cutting his own flesh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he sat composed and attentive at the feet of Jesus, Mark v. 15. receiving heavenly instruction from his lips, and learning the meekness of wisdom from his example. So salutary and beneficial is the transforming power of the Holy Ghost the Comforter; softening the rugged, sweetening the morose, and calming the passionate temper. It is undoubtedly the utmost improvement, and the highest happiness of our nature, to have the image of the blessed God reinstamped on our hearts. This is an earnest, and an anticipation also, of endless felicity; a bud which will open in heaven, and spread into immortal glory; a dawn, which will shine more and more, till the Sun of Righteousness arises, and brightens it into everlasting day. This bud the sanctifying Spirit ingrafts, this dawn the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ diffuses, in the barren and benighted soul.

In a word, receive this righteousness, and you have a title to all blessings, whether they be present or future, bodily or spiritual, temporal or eternal. From the necessary conveniencies of bread to eat and raiment to put on, even to the crowns of glory and the fulness of joy, all, all are owing to our Redeemer's righteousness. You see now, Theron, that our scheme has no tendency to impoverish your spiritual condition, or diminish your true riches, any more than those tracts of water which surround our island are detrimental to the wealth of its inhabitants. Detrimental! No; they are an inexhaustible source of treasure. They convey to our use the choicest accommodations and the most elegant delights; such as would in vain be expected, if the whole ocean was converted into the finest meads and most fertile pastures. So—but to apply this comparison, would forestal your principal question.

"*Do not* these favours, though unspeakably pre-

cious in themselves, tend to the introduction or support of ungodliness?"—Quite the reverse. Have we redemption through our Saviour's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins? We are redeemed, not that we may sink in supineness, or launch into licentiousness, but that we may be a "peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Are we made the children of God? Then "let our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16. This is the genuine consequence of such a doctrine, and the proper effect of such a benefit. Are we vested with sacred privileges? These admonish us, these urge us, to walk worthy of him "who hath called us to his kingdom and glory," 1 Thess. ii. 12. Shall the citizens of heaven be animated with no higher views than the slaves of appetite and drudges of the world? Are we constituted heirs of the promises? The grace which they ascertain is intended to make us partakers of a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.; and the encouragement which they administer incites us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, incites us to perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Such high immunities are a most endearing persuasive, not to disgrace, but magnify—not to provoke, but please—their unspeakably beneficent Author.

I might farther observe, that holiness is one of the most distinguished blessings in our system; nay, is the very central blessing, to which all the others verge, in which they all terminate. Were we chosen from eternity? It was for this purpose, that we may "be holy and unblamable in love," Eph. i. 4. Are we called in time? It is to this intent, that we may "shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Are we "created again in Christ Jesus?" It is, to capacitate us for acceptable service, and to furnish us unto every good work, Eph. ii. 10. "I will put my Spirit within you, saith the Lord." For what end?

"That ye may walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Here comes in my Theron's favourite endowment—sincere obedience. Far, very far from discarding sincere obedience, we would only introduce it under its due character, and in its proper order. Under its due character; as the fruit, not the cause, of our interest in Christ's righteousness: In its due order; as following, not preceding the gift of justification.

These privileges, my dear friend, are salutary as the pool of Bethesda, John v. 4. They are restorative as the waters of Siloam, John ix. 7.; or like that sacred stream flowing from the sanctuary, which healed the rivers, healed the sea, and made even the desert flourish, Ezek. xlvii. 8, 9. If justification by the righteousness of Christ had a tendency to subvert the foundation of holiness, to confirm the hypocritical professor in his neglect of moral duties, or discourage the sincere convert from the pursuit of real virtue; it would, doubtless, be unworthy of any acceptation, or rather, worthy of universal abhorrence. But I dare appeal, not only to the nature of the doctrine and the reason of things, but to the experience of all; yes, of all who "have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. "Speak, ye who are enabled to believe that God is reconciled, has received the all-satisfying atonement, and placed his Son's righteousness to your account! that he regards you as his children, and will receive you to his glory! Have you not, under such convictions, felt your hearts exulting with conscious joy; and every power of your souls springing forward to glorify your heavenly Father—glorify him by every instance of obedience, fidelity, and zeal?"

Can such invaluable benefits have a prejudicial influence on our practice, if to the consideration of their superlative worth, we add that unequalled price by which they were purchased? He who is high above all height, humbled himself to be made of a woman, *and born* in a stable; that we might be admitted into

the family of God, and exalted to the mansions of heaven. And will this great humiliation, which is the basis of our happiness, prompt us to look down with contempt on others, or entertain arrogant thoughts of ourselves?

The Only Begotten and the supreme delight of the Father, was numbered with transgressors and ranked with felons, that we might be joined to the innumerable company of angels, and associated with saints in glory everlasting. And will any one make this a precedent or a plea for "walking in the counsel of the ungodly; for standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful?" Psal. i. 1.

All manner of evil was spoken of the faultless Jesus; his blessed name was vilified by blaspheming tongues, and his unblamable conduct blackened with the foulest aspersions; on purpose that we may be applauded when we are judged, and each hear those transporting words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Will this imbolden us to dishonour our Lord, and stain our holy profession? Shall we from hence be induced to open the mouths of his enemies, and furnish them with occasion to speak reproachfully?

He went, galled with the lashes of the scourge, and penetrated with the pungent thorns; he went, loaded with the execrable cross, and marking the way with his precious blood; thus he went to his ignominious and tormenting exit, that we may enter into Zion with songs of triumph on our lips, and with everlasting joy on our heads. Does this invite us to go, crowned with rose-buds, to the house of riot; or go, muffled in disguise, to the midnight revel? Will it not rather incline us to sit down at his pierced feet, and bathe them with our tears, and take delight* in mourning for our crucified Lord?

* The sorrow arising from such tender and grateful views of the crucified Jesus, is that evangelical godly sorrow, which "worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of," 2 Cor. vii. 10. And is there not reason,—when we consider the pains he felt, the curse he bore, and the blood he shed,—is there not abundant reason to say, with Homer's afflicted hero, Τετάρπωμεσθα γοριο? Iliad, X.

Behold! he hangs on the cursed tree. There, there he hangs; rent with wounds, and racked with pain. He pours his groans, and spills his blood. He bows his head, his patient princely head, and dies—astonishing, ravishing consideration! he dies for you and me. And will this harden our hearts, or arm our hands, to crucify him afresh by any allowed iniquity? Does not reason suggest, and Christianity dictate, and all that is ingenuous enforce, the apostle's important inference? "If one died for all, then they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them," 2 Cor. v. 15, 16.

He thought upon us long before the foundations of the world were laid; he remembers us, now he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and will never, never forget us, through all the revolutions of eternity. And is this a motive to forget his name, to disregard his word, or to imitate the shameful neutrality and indifference of Gallio? Impressed with a sense of this invariable and everlasting kindness, surely we shall declare ourselves as those captives in Babylon concerning their dear native city Jerusalem: "If I forget thee," O blessed Jesus, "let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

> ——Remember thee!
> Ay, my dear Lord, while memory holds a seat
> In this devoted breast—Remember thee!
> Yes, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> Which youth and observation copied there,
> And thy remembrance all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain.—SHAKSPEARE.

Is it possible, Theron, for the contemplation of such goodness, to weaken the motives, or relax the springs of obedience? As soon may lenient balms kill, and rankest poisons cure. Is such a belief calculated to discourage duty, and patronize licentiousness? Just as much as vernal showers are fitted to cleave *the* earth with chinks, or summer suns to glaze the

waters with ice. When Antony made an oration to the soldiers on occasion of Cæsar's death; when he shewed them their honoured master's robe, transfixed with so many daggers; when he reminded them of the victories they had won under their assassinated commander; when he farther informed them, that their murdered general had remembered them in his will, had bequeathed all his fine gardens and beautiful walks to their use and delight;—heavens! how they took fire! Revenge sparkled in their eyes; revenge flamed in their bosoms; revenge was all their cry. They flew to the houses of the conspirators; laid them even with the ground; and, had they met the owners, would have torn them limb from limb. Some such resentment against sin will a sense of our adored Redeemer's sufferings excite; especially when set home by his blessed Spirit, and considered in connexion with those detestable iniquities which caused them, and with those invaluable blessings which were procured by them. Nothing, nothing is so effectual to beget the most irreconcileable abhorrence of all ungodliness, to make the remembrance of it bitter as wormwood, the temptations to it horrible as hell.

Let me remind you of an incident related by your favourite historian Xenophon. Cyrus had taken captive the young prince of Armenia, together with his beautiful and blooming princess, whom he had lately married, and of whom he was passionately fond. When both were brought to the tribunal, Cyrus asked the prince, what he would give to be reinstated in his kingdom? He answered, with an air of indifference, "That as for his crown, and his own liberty, he valued them at a very low rate: But, if Cyrus would restore his beloved princess to her native dignity and hereditary possessions, he should infinitely rejoice; and would pay, (this he uttered with tenderness and ardour), would willingly pay his life for the purchase." Could such a declaration, so highly endearing, alienate the affections of the princess, or induce her to violate her fidelity? Let her own conduct

answer the query. When all the prisoners were dismissed with freedom, it is impossible to express how they were charmed with their royal benefactor. Some celebrated his martial accomplishments; some applauded his social virtues; all were prodigal of their praises, and lavish in grateful acknowledgments. And you, said the prince, (addressing himself to his bride), what think you of Cyrus? I did not observe him, replied the princess. Not observe him! Upon what then was your attention fixed? Upon that dear and generous man who declared, "he would purchase my liberty at the expense of his very life."* Was her heart impressed, were all her thoughts engrossed by that benevolent offer? And shall ours be less affected with the incomparably more tender and endearing love of Christ? He was not only willing, but actually laid down his life for us; a life immensely precious, and of higher dignity than all heavens. He laid down his life, not for amiable persons or worthy creatures, but for vile earth, and miserable sinners; purchasing thereby for us and our children, privileges of inestimable worth and of everlasting duration.

Will not such beneficence, so unmerited, so unequalled, win the most reluctant, and melt the most obdurate heart? The heart which is not wrought upon by this miracle of divine compassion, must be steel, must be adamant—quite impenetrable, and absolutely incorrigible. "O thou ever-blessed, thou all-gracious Redeemer, 'thy love to us is wonderful; passing,' I will not say, 'the love of women,' 2 Sam. i. 26. but the power of language and the reach of thought! Who can hold out against such charming attractives? who can resist such heavenly goodness? Only let a sense of thy love be always warm, always operative on our minds. This shall be instead of a thousand arguments to engage, instead of ten thousand motives to quicken our obedience." Other

* Εγω μεν καν της ψυχης πριαιμην ωστε μηποτε λατρευσαι ταυτην.
XENOPH. *de Cyri Instit.* lib. iii.

motives may produce external services, or hypocritical performances; terrors may extort the drudgery of the hand, bribes may purchase the adulation of the tongue; but this conciliates the will, this proselytes the affections, this captivates the soul, and makes all its powers "like the chariots of Aminadab," Cant. vi. 12. ready, expedite, and active in duty.

Hear the holy apostle giving an account of himself and his spiritual state. He speaks in language somewhat similar, though greatly superior, to the profession of the Armenian princess: "So great is the glory, so rich is the grace, so superabundant are the merits of my Redeemer, that I am determined to know nothing but Christ Jesus, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. Ask the same zealous apostle, what prompted him to such indefatigable diligence, and animated him with such invincible fortitude? Why did he decline no toil, and dread no danger; rejoice in tribulation, and glory in reproach;* welcome persecution, and defy death? This is his reply, "The love of Christ constraineth me; beareth me on, with much the same strong, steady, prevailing influence, which winds and tide exert when they waft the vessel to its destined harbour."

Shall we hear what another disciple, one of the most advanced profiçients in divine love, says upon the subject? one who learned his knowledge, not in the school of philosophy, but on his Saviour's bosom? "This is the love of God, that we walk after his commandments," 2 John, ver. 6. This is

* That supreme affection to the blessed Jesus, which reigned in the hearts of his primitive disciples, could never have been so emphatically displayed by any strokes of eloquence, as by their own cheerful and heroic manner of expressing themselves, with relation to their sufferings. Far from regretting, "I take pleasure (says the apostle) in afflictions," 2 Cor. xii. 10. "To you," adds the same apostle, "it is given (ἐχαρισθη) as a desirable privilege, to suffer for the adorable Jesus," Phil. i. 29. St Luke, recording the outrages committed on two disciples, for preaching boldly in the name of Christ, uses a phrase remarkably gallant and spirited: "They departed from the council rejoicing, ὁτι κατηξιωθησαν ατιμασθηναι, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame," in so venerable and glorious a cause.

the natural fruit, this the certain evidence, of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable Being. What? Not that we supinely neglect, much less that we profanely violate his sacred precepts; but that, with assiduity and delight, we make them the rule of our conduct. "Charity edifieth," 1 Cor. viii. 1.; this divine love, far from razing the foundations, far from demolishing the structure, "buildeth up," (Οἰκοδομεῖ) the fair fabric of universal godliness.

Let me borrow an illustration from your own letter. When a pebble is cast into the smooth canal, it moves the centre and forms a circle. The first creates a second, the second breaks into a third; they continue to multiply and expand themselves, till the whole surface is covered with circular undulations. Thus, the love of an all-gracious Redeemer, when "shed abroad in the soul by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5. will diffuse itself through every intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty, till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the law of the blessed God. So that I am persuaded there is a great deal of truth and solidity, as every one must acknowledge there is a peculiar spirit and beauty, in the apostrophe of our poet;

> Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding love!
> Thou maker of new morals to mankind,
> The grand morality is love of Thee.
>
> *Night Thoughts*, No. iv.

You mentioned the loadstone, as most signally and most extensively serviceable in the seafaring business. Such is faith, so efficacious, in practical Christianity. This, perhaps, you think a scanty and defective principle. The property of shewing the northern part of the world, may seem equally mean and inconsiderable. But as the one is the very soul of navigation, the other is the very life of holiness. It is somewhat like the stone, which the Babylonian monarch saw in his dream, "cut from the rock without hands," Dan. ii. 34.; which, though despicable to human appearance, was mighty in operation; destroyed the

superb statue; became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Thus will faith exert and diffuse its kindly yet triumphant energy, to every corruption, that it may be subdued; to every virtue, that it may be cherished.

Faith is a real persuasion, that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead; that, through this great atonement and meritorious obedience he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and every spiritual blessing.*

When the Almighty sunk the cavities of the ocean, and replenished them with the liquid element, he provided an inexhaustible source of moisture for the refreshment of every animal, and the nutriment of every vegetable. In like manner, wherever he works this true faith, he plants the seed of universal holiness, and provides for the propagation of every virtue. This persuasion of the divine good-will overcomes our natural reluctance, and excites a fervent desire to please our most merciful Father. This experience of the abundant grace of Christ attracts and assimilates the soul; turning it into his amiable likeness, "as the wax is turned to the imprinted seal." What will be the language of such a person?

"Did my exalted Master empty himself and become poor, that his most unworthy servant might be filled with all the fulness of God? Eph. iii. 19. And shall not I cheerfully deny myself the expensive pleasures of the world, that I may have somewhat to bestow on his needy children? Has the death of Christ, as a punishment, satisfied the most rigorous justice for my sins; as a price, has it redeemed me from

* This definition of faith may possibly, at the first view, dissatisfy and alarm even some pious people, including, as they apprehend, too great a degree of assurance. But if they please to take it in connexion with the explanation and adjustment delivered in the sixteenth Dialogue, I hope all cause of disapprobation or surprise will vanish. I flatter myself, that the sentiment will be found, not only comfortable for the sinner, but agreeable to Scripture; and truly unexceptionable, as well as highly desirable.

every evil; and, as a sacrifice, made my peace with God most high? And shall I not, by these mercies of my dying Lord, be induced to present all the members of my body, and all the faculties of my soul, as a living sacrifice to his honour, Rom. xii. 1. to be employed in his service, and resigned to his will? Do I believe that my Saviour has not only rescued me from hell, but established my title to all the blessings included in the promises, and all the felicity laid up in heaven? And can I neglect to seek those invaluable blessings, or forbear to aspire after this immense felicity? Can I be so ungrateful as to affront, so insensible as to forget, the infinitely beneficent Author of both? Am I persuaded that the Prince of Peace is entered into glory as my forerunner, Heb. vi. 20., and has prepared mansions of bliss for my final reception? And shall I not follow him thither in my hopes and my affections? be as a pilgrim below, and have my conversation above? Is not this a most sweet and effectual method of gaining my heart; and if my heart, then all my powers, to his blessed Self?"

Such, my dear Theron, will be the effects of faith. Therefore it is not in vain, much less to the discouragement of real virtue, that the Scripture lays such a stress upon faith; so frequently urges the importance and necessity of faith; represents faith as the principal work of the divine Spirit, and the great instrument of receiving salvation: because it is a sure, a sovereign means of "purifying the heart," Acts xv. 9.; and never fails to "work by love," Gal. v. 6. Was faith, as some people are apt to imagine, like a candle put under a bushel, or like the lamps which burn in sepulchres; it would then be an insignificant labour to inculcate it, and no better than an empty flourish of words to celebrate it. But nothing is more certain than that faith is a vital, an operative, a victorious principle.

Christ is a storehouse of all good. Whatever is necessary to remove our guilt, whatever is expedient

for renewing our nature, whatever is proper to fit us for the eternal fruition of God, all this is laid up in Christ; and all this is received by faith, for application, use, and enjoyment. Accordingly, when Zaccheus believed, he commenced a new man; his bowels yearned with compassion; the rapacious publican became a friend to the needy, and a father to the poor, Luke xix. 8.—When the Macedonians believed, how eminently was their spirit ennobled and their practice improved! Though pressed with afflictions, their souls overflowed with joy; and, even in the deepest poverty, they signalized themselves by the abundance of their liberality.* When the first converts believed, the change in their behaviour was so remarkable, the holiness of their lives so exemplary, that they won the favour and commanded the respect of all the people, Acts ii. 47. In short, it is as impossible for the sun to be in his meridian sphere, and not to dissipate darkness or diffuse light, as for faith to exist in the soul, and not to exalt the temper and meliorate the conduct. That my dear Theron may be established in faith, may increase in faith, may abound in faith, is the most affectionate wish that thought can suggest or friendship adopt. May his faith therefore be established like the mountain oaks, increase like the progressive stream, till it spreads and abounds like the overflowing flood!

I intended to have closed my letter, and confirmed my point, by a very memorable story. But however your patience may persevere, my time fails, and my hand is weary. The next post, if nothing unexpected intervenes, shall bring you the sequel. May it, when brought to my friend, be as "a nail fastened in a sure place," and give the rivet of conviction to all these important truths! In the mean time, or rather at all times, I remain cordially and invariably yours,

ASPASIO.

* 2 Cor. viii. 2. Here is, especially in the original, as fine an antithesis, perhaps, as ever was penned.

Letter XI.—Aspasio to Theron.

Dear Theron,—Faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a fundamental principle in that invaluable system of sacred and divine philosophy—the gospel; by which the heavenly Teacher is continually training up millions of rational and immortal creatures for the true perfection of their nature, for the final fruition of their God; or, in other words, for a state of consummate happiness and everlasting exaltation. In this school, may you and I be humble students and daily proficients! While others are ambitious of glittering distinctions and sounding titles, may it be our highest aim, our greatest glory, to answer the character of believers! By this character the supreme Lord distinguishes his chosen people, and denominates the heirs of salvation. This character stands fairest in the book of life, and brightest in the annals of eternity. This character, however neglected or disesteemed among men, will be remembered and had in honour when the pompous names of statesman and generalissimo are known no more.

As faith is of such singular and extensive efficacy in genuine Christianity, methinks I would have all our meditations terminate on its glorious object, and be calculated to invigorate so beneficial a principle. When we reflect on that stupendous act, the creation of the world out of nothing; let us remember, it was his act, who "obtained eternal redemption for us." When we contemplate that immense theatre of wonders, the heavens and their shining hosts; let us not forget that they are all his works, who "brought in everlasting righteousness" for us. Do we turn our thoughts to the ocean, that spacious and magnificent canal which covers more than half the globe? It was *formed* by his word, and is obedient to his will, who

"loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Do we take a view of the earth, that grand and inexhaustible magazine, which furnishes such a multiplicity of conveniencies for so many millions of creatures? It is all his property, and wholly at his disposal, who "emptied himself" (ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸν) for our sake, and "had not where to lay his head," Phil. ii. 7.: For thus saith the inspired philosopher, thus saith the oracle of revelation, "All things were made by him, and for him," Col. i. 16.

The great Creator has enriched this habitable globe with a profusion of good. He has adorned it with a variety, an order, and a beauty, which are perfectly charming. He has ennobled it with a dignity, a sublimity, and a grandeur, which are at once delightful and astonishing. In all this, reason cannot but discern a clear manifestation of power, a bright display of wisdom, and a rich demonstration of benignity. But will the Creator himself vouchsafe to be made flesh, on purpose that he may obey and die for his guilty creatures? This is what neither the utmost penetration of men, nor the very superior intelligence of angels, could ever have demonstrated, discovered, or conceived. This exceeds whatever the elements have produced, whatever the sun has beheld, as much as the extent and magnificence of the planetary system exceed the dimensions and the furniture of a shepherd's hut. To reveal this, is the blessed peculiarity of the gospel. To know and believe this, is the distinguishing prerogative of a Christian. To apply this, to dwell upon this, to connect this with all our observations of the universe, should be our favourite and habitual employ. This will improve wonder into devotion, and raise the entertainments of science into the joy of salvation. This will render every philosophical speculation a strengthener of our faith, and make the various scenes of nature a guide to grace, and a step to glory. When this is done, then all things attain their proper end; and as they are by Christ, so they are for Christ.

But I forget myself, my business, and my promise. I am to establish the point by incontestable fact, not to embellish it by loose harangue. With pleasure I address myself to discharge the obligation; and exemplify, in a very memorable instance, the power of faith on religious practice. From whence shall I fetch my exemplification? From the memoirs of the indefatigable apostle of the Gentiles. Here I find one, most concisely, and at the same time most forcibly displayed.

"After these things were ended," says the sacred historian, "Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome," Acts xix. 21. Who can observe, and not admire, this plain unambitious manner of relating a series of labours, the most signally successful, and most extensively useful? Nothing in human conduct ever surpassed the greatness of the one, and perhaps nothing in historical composition ever equalled the simplicity of the other.

St Paul had already reduced Ephesus and Asia to the obedience of Christ. He had already brought Macedonia and Achaia into subjection to the gospel. He had long ago erected the standard and spread the triumphs of Christianity in the regions of Arabia. Yet, as if he had hitherto achieved nothing, he bends his forces towards Jerusalem. Then he marks out Rome for the seat of his spiritual warfare. After this he forms the same beneficent design upon Spain; including in his comprehensive plan the metropolis and the boundaries* of the known world. The universe is but just large enough to be the scene of his action; he never discontinues the charitable campaign but with the last breath of his life; and he speaks of this unintermitted course of arduous and dangerous

* Spain was then supposed to be the boundary of the western, as the Ganges was reckoned the extremity of the eastern world

Omnibus in terris quæ sunt a Gadibus usque
Auroram et Gangen. Juv. *Sat.* x.

services, as if he was only going to make a friendly visit, or join in a party of innocent pleasure: "After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome."*

Which of your Alexanders, which of your Cæsars, which of all the heroes renowned in Grecian or Roman story, can vie with the zeal and magnanimity of this poor despised tent-maker? so poor, that he was constrained to work with his own hands for a morsel of bread; so despised, that he was frequently treated as the offscouring of all things. Notwithstanding all these discouragements, what did he not attempt, what did he not accomplish, for the honour of his Master and the good of his fellow-creatures?—He embarks in a shallop; he has neither shield nor spear; yet he purposes to command the ocean, and conquer the globe. What greatness of soul was here! he expects (Acts xx. 23.) nothing but poverty, contempt, and death; yet his heart is big with the hopes of enriching, ennobling, and saving ages and generations. What benevolence of temper was this! Should you inquire concerning this illustrious champion of the cross, Who were his potent auxiliaries? None but the divine Spirit. What were his mighty weapons? Nothing but the word of truth and grace. Whence proceeded his intrepid, his enterprizing, his all-conquering resolution? Only from faith, a lively faith in Jesus Christ.

This, I think, is a sufficient confirmation of my doctrine. Nevertheless, I have another instance to produce; one that was exhibited in an age when the glorious object of our faith shone with dim lustre and with distant beams; yet it may justly be admired, and will hardly be eclipsed, by the most enlightened among the Christian saints. To keep you no longer in suspense, the case I mean is that which Moses records, and the apostle celebrates: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac;

* I am quite charmed, I must confess, with this very simple, but incomparably gallant manner of the apostle's speaking. Far beyond all the pomp of panegyric, it displays the hero.

and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son," Heb. xi. 17.

As this is so singular an example of the efficacious and triumphant operation of faith, unequalled in any nation of the world or under any dispensation of religion, you will give me leave to dwell a little on some of its marvellous circumstances.

Abraham was an eminent and distinguished servant of the most high God, favoured with peculiar manifestations of the divine will, and dignified with the honourable title of his Maker's friend, 2 Chron. xx. 7.; Isa. xli. 8. Yet even this man is harassed with a long succession of troubles; and, which was reckoned in those ages the most deplorable calamity, "goes childless."*

Long he waits, worshipping God with the most patient resignation. At length an oracle from the Lord gives him hope, gives him assurance of a son. Joyfully he receives the promise, and rests in humble expectation of its accomplishment. Several years run their rounds, but no pleasing infant prattles in his arms, or is dandled upon his knees. At last the handmaid becomes pregnant. But what a disappointment was here! This is the son of the bond-woman, not of the free.

How afflicting the case of this excellent person! His kinsfolk and acquaintance see their olive-branches flourishing round about their tables. Even his ungodly neighbours have children at their desire, and leave the residue of their substance for their babes. But Abraham, the worshipper of the Almighty, the favourite of heaven; this Abraham is destitute of an heir to support his name, to propagate his family,

* There was so much gall in this calamity, that it imbittered every other species of happiness. Visited by this affliction, the patriarch seems to have been incapable of relishing any other comfort: "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Gen. xv. 2. I would entreat the reader to take particular notice of this circumstance. It will have the same effect upon the representation of Abraham's obedience, and the whole series of his difficulties, as a magnifying glass has upon *the objects to* which it is applied.

and inherit the blessing. O the straits to which the believer is sometimes reduced! How does a sovereign providence try his faith, as it were in a furnace of fire! not that it may be consumed, but refined, and come forth with augmented lustre, to the praise of ever-faithful, all-sufficient grace.

God is pleased to renew the grant, and assure him more explicitly that Sarah shall have a son. But this notice comes at a very late period in life, when Sarah is advanced in years, and too old, according to the course of nature, to conceive. However, the pious patriarch "staggers not through unbelief, but hopes even against hope," Rom. iv. 18—20. Is it improbable? is it difficult? nay, is it to all human appearance impossible? So much the fitter for the exertion, and so much the more proper for the display of almighty power.

At last the gift so earnestly desired is vouchsafed. Sarah has a child—a son—an Isaac; one who should be a source of consolation and delight to his parents; should "fill their mouth with laughter,* and their tongue with joy," Psal. cxxvi. 2. With tender care, doubtless, this pleasant plant is reared. Many prayers are put up for his long life, and great happiness. The fond parents watch over him as over the apple of their own eye. Their life is bound up in the life of the lad, Gen. xliv. 30. He grows in grace as he grows in stature. So amiable is his temper, and so engaging his behaviour, as could not fail of endearing him even to a stranger; how much more to such indulgent parents, after so long a state of barrenness, and so many expectations so frequently frustrated.

Now, methinks, we are ready to congratulate the happy sire, and flatter ourselves that his tribulations have an end; that the storms which ruffled the noon of life are blown over, and the evening of his age is becoming calm and serene. But let "not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off," 1 Kings xx. 11. Our warfare on earth is

* This is the import of the Hebrew name Isaac.

never accomplished till we bow our head and give up the ghost. The sharpest, the severest trial is still behind. God, the supreme and uncontrollable God, demands the child. It is the will of heaven that he make his exit, just as he arrives at manhood. "Where now, Abraham, are all thy pleasing prospects? How often didst thou say, in thy fond delighted heart, 'This same shall comfort us concerning our trouble?' Gen. v. 29. Many have been my sorrows; but this child shall dry up my tears, and bring me to my grave in peace. Alas! this lovely flower is to be cut down, in its fairest, fullest bloom. All thy shining hopes are overcast in a moment."

"Abraham!"† says God.—Abraham knows the voice. It is the voice of condescending goodness. He had often heard it with a rapture of delight.—Instantly he replies, "Here I am. Speak, Lord! for thy servant is all attention:" hoping, no doubt, to receive some fresh manifestation of the divine good-will to himself and his family; or some new discovery of the method in which the divine wisdom would accomplish the promises, "I will multiply thy seed: I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

"Take thy son," adds God. And might not Abraham reasonably expect, that, since his son was advanced to years of maturity, he should be directed how to settle him in the world with honour and advantage; where to find a virtuous and fruitful partner of his bed? He is commanded, not barely to take his son, but his only son, his son Isaac, whom

† The sentence with which the inspired historian introduces this affecting narrative is unhappily translated in our Bibles, נסה את אברהם, "God did tempt Abraham." This expression cannot but sound harsh to those ears which have been accustomed to understand, by *tempter* and *tempting*, persons utterly odious and practices extremely pernicious. Whereas the true and natural signification of the original is, "he tried or explored." God sounded the depth, and measured the height of his servant's faith, in order to erect an everlasting monument of the victorious efficacy of this sacred principle, and exhibit an illustrious pattern to all them who should hereafter believe.

he loved. How must these affecting images awaken all that soft complacency, and all that tender triumph, which are known only to the fondly feeling heart of a parent! Must not such an introduction, so remarkably endearing, heighten his expectation of some signal mercy to be conferred on the beloved youth; and would it not render the blessing peculiarly acceptable, more than doubly welcome?

Was he not then startled, was he not horribly amazed, when, instead of some renewed expression of the divine favour, he received the following orders? "Take now thy son—thy only son—Isaac—whom thou lovest,—and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2.

Was ever message so alarming? each word more piercing to parental ears, than the keenest dagger to the heart. Every clause brings an additional load of misery; till the whole command swells into the most accumulated and aggravated woe.

"Abraham, take thy son." Who but Abraham could have forbore remonstrating and pleading on such an occasion?—Ananias, being charged with a commission to Saul the persecutor, takes upon him to argue the case with his almighty Sovereign: "Lord, I have heard by many concerning this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name," Acts ix. 13, 14. Sure, it can never be safe or expedient to present myself voluntarily before him, who came hither breathing out threatenings and slaughter against me! What is this but to court danger, and run with open eyes into ruin? Thus Ananias: and with how much greater appearance of reason might Abraham have replied, —"Lord, shall I lose my child? lose him, almost as soon as I have received him? Didst thou give him only to tantalize thy servant? Remember, gracious God, the name he bears. How shall he answer its cheering *import? how* shall he be a source of satis-

faction to his parents, or the father of many nations, if thou takest him away in his unmarried state, and in the very prime of his years?

"If sin lies at the door, let me expiate the guilt. Let thousands of rams, let every bullock in my stalls bleed at thy altar. My wealth, blessed Lord! and all my goods, are nothing in comparison of my Isaac. Command me to be stript of my possessions; command me to roam as a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, and I will magnify thy holy name. Only let my child, my dear child, be spared.

"Or, if nothing will appease thy indignation but human blood, let my death be the sacrifice. Upon me be the vengeance. I am old and grey-headed. The best of my days are past, and the best of my services done. If this tottering wall tumbles, there will be little or no cause for regret. But if the pillar of my house, and the foundation of my hopes,—if he be snatched from me, what good will my life do me? 'O my son! my son! would God I might die for thee!' 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

"If it must be a blooming youth, in the flower of his days, be pleased, most merciful God, to select the victim from some fruitful family. There are those who abound in children. Children are multiplied unto them; and, though many were removed, yet would their table be full. There are those who have flocks and herds, whereas I have only this one little lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 3., the very solace of my soul, and the stay of my declining years; and shall this be taken away, while all those are left?"

Yes, Abraham; it is thy son, and not another's, that is marked for the victim. What distress, had he not been supported by faith, what exquisite distress must have overwhelmed this affectionate parent! How could he refrain from crying out, and with a flood of tears,—"If the decree cannot be reversed, if it must be the fruit of my own body, Oh! that Ishmael, the son of the handmaid—How shall I speak *it? my* heart bleeds at the thought; at the thought

even of his expiring agonies, and untimely death! But as for Isaac, the son of my beloved spouse, the son of my old age, the crown of all my labours; how, how shall I survive such a loss? The blow that goes to his heart, must be fatal to us both.

"Yet, if he must die, and there is no remedy; may he not at least expire by a natural dissolution? May not some common distemper unloose the cords of life, and lay him down gently in the tomb? May not his fond mother and myself seal his closing eyes, and soften his dying pangs by our tender offices?"

No, Abraham. Thy son must be slaughtered on the altar. He shall have no other bed of death than the pile of hewn wood; no other winding-sheet than his own clotted gore. The sacrificing knife, and not any common disease, shall bring him to his end. And think not to satisfy thy sorrowing fondness, by paying him the last honours of a decent interment. It is the Lord's will that he be cut in pieces, consumed to ashes, and made a burnt-offering; so that nothing shall remain to be preserved or embalmed. It shall not be in thy power to soothe thy grief, by resorting to his grave, and weeping at his sepulchre, and saying, "Here lies Isaac."

"But if all must be executed, God grant these eyes may never behold the dismal tragedy! If my Isaac must be bound hand and foot for the slaughter, if he must receive the steel into his bosom, and welter in his own innocent blood, heaven forbid that I should behold so killing a spectacle!"

Even this mitigation cannot be granted. Thou must not only be an eye-witness of his agony, but be the executioner of thy Isaac. Thy hands must lift the deadly weapon; thy hands must point it to the beloved breast; thine own hands must urge its way through the gushing veins and shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart. God will not permit the work to be done by another. The father, the father must be the butcher.

Is not *the wretched* father stunned and thunder-*struck? does he not* stand fixed in horror, and speech-

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less with grief? What words can be mournful enough to express his sorrows? Unheard of, shocking affair! Nature recoils at the very thought! How then can the best of fathers perform the deed? How shall he answer it to the wife of his bosom, the mother of the lovely youth? How can he justify it to the world? They will never be persuaded that the God of goodness can delight in cruelty, or authorize so horrid an action. Will they not take up a taunting proverb, and say at every turn, "There goes the man, the monster rather, that has imbrued his hands in his own son's blood! This is he that pretends to piety, and yet could be so savage as to assassinate, coolly and deliberately assassinate, an only child! Might not thousands of such reflections crowd into his thoughts, and rack his very soul?

But God is unchangeable. Positive is his word, and must be obeyed; obeyed immediately too. Take now thy son. The Lord's commandment requireth speed. No time is to be lost in bidding adieu to his relations, or in fruitless supplications for revoking the doom. Nay, cheerfully, as well as instantly, must this command be fulfilled. The great Jehovah expects alacrity in his service.—Prodigious trial indeed! Yet not too great for a faith which the divine Spirit infuses, and the divine Spirit sustains.

The patriarch knew full well, that obedience is no obedience, unless it be willing and cheerful. Therefore he consults not with flesh and blood. He is deaf to the arguings of carnal reason, and regards not the yearnings of paternal affection. Without a murmuring word, without a moment's delay, he sets forward on his journey; not so much as betraying the least uneasiness, to alarm his wife; nor heaving the least sigh, to surprise his attendants. And canst thou, Abraham, canst thou persist in thy purpose? can thy heart firmly resolve, can thy hand steadily execute, this inexpressibly severe task? Most triumphant faith *indeed*! Deservedly art thou styled "the father of *the faithful*," Rom. iv. 18. Thy faith is stronger *than all* the ties of affection; stronger than all the

pleas of nature, or all the terrors of death,—even of a death far more dreadful than thy own.

And now must he travel during three tedious, and, one would think, most melancholy days, with his Issac constantly before his eyes; with the bloody scene continually in his apprehensions; and nothing to divert his mind from dwelling on every bitter circumstance, and all the grievous consequences. "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and beheld afar off the appointed place. His servants are ordered to keep their distance; while himself, with the fire and the knife in his hands; and his son, with the burden of wood on his shoulders, "went both of them together." Who does not pity the sweet youth, toiling under that load which must soon reek with his blood, and soon reduce him to ashes? Meanwhile the intended victim, wondering to see all those preparations made, and no proper animal near, asks this pertinent question, "My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Sure, this endearing speech, which discovered such a knowledge of religion, and such a concern for its duties, must rouse the father's anguish, and shake his determination. How can he be the death of so much innocence, and so much piety?

Faith overcomes all difficulties. Unmoved, and inflexible, the patriarch replies, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son." After this he discloses the strange, the startling secret: "Thou thyself, my dear child, are destined to this purpose. The God who bestowed thee on my longing desires is pleased to require thee again at my hand. The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; let us both adore the name of the Lord. Let us confide in his promised goodness, and unanimously profess, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It does not appear that the amiable youth resisted or gainsaid. He had strength enough to oppose, and speed enough to escape,† the attempts of an aged father. Either

† *According to Josephus, Isaac was, when he submitted himself to the slaughter, about twenty-five years old. Others think his age was*

or both of which, the law of self-preservation might seem to dictate, and the light of reason to justify. But Isaac knew that his father was a prophet. In this prophetical character, he sees and acknowledges the warrant of Heaven. And since his Creator calls, he is content to go. Excellent Isaac! who does not admire thy courage? who is not charmed with thy resignation? and must we, in a few minutes, must we see thee a pale, a bloody, a breathless corpse?

Methinks, I shudder as we draw near the direful catastrophe. The altar is built; the wood laid in order; all things are ready for the solemn service; and Isaac offers his willing throat to the knife. Nevertheless, that the work of destiny may be sure, and no one particular relating to a sacrifice omitted, "Abraham binds his son." I have known a stubborn malefactor quite unalarmed when sentenced to the ignominious tree; not at all impressed with the most awful representations of eternal judgment; yet, when a person came to measure him for his coffin, the hardened wretch was hard no longer. He started, turned pale, and trembled in every joint. Even such a circumstance makes no impression on Abraham; neither alters his purpose, nor changes his countenance. He measures his Isaac; measures those limbs which he had so frequently and so tenderly caressed; and if not for the coffin, yet for immediate slaughter.

Having bound him—surprising resolution!—bound him for the sword and for the flame, he "lays him upon the altar, on the wood." There now lies Isaac; the dear, the dutiful, the religious Isaac! Abraham's joy; Sarah's delight; the heir of the promises! there he lies, all meek and resigned; expecting every moment the stroke of death to fall. O parents! parents! do not your bowels yearn? is not humanity itself distressed at the scene? Say, thou who art a father, what thinkest thou of Abraham's obedience? couldst thou, to such a son, have acted such a part?

thirty-three; which makes him more exactly resemble his suffering *Lord*. Then his father must be above a hundred and thirty years old. *Either* account will justify Aspasio's supposition.

See! the father, resolute to the very last, unsheaths the murdering blade; makes bare the innocent bosom; and marks the place where life may find the speediest exit. "His heart is fixed!" he stretches his arm; and now, even now, is aiming the mortal blow; when, —rejoice, ye worshippers of a gracious God! break forth into singing, ye that are in pain for the tried parent!—the Lord Almighty interposes in this article of extreme need.* The Angel of the covenant speaks from heaven, and withholds the lifted hand, in the very act to strike. God, who only intended to manifest his faith, and make it honourable, bids him desist. God applauds his obedience; substitutes another sacrifice in Isaac's stead; renews his covenant with the father; and not only reprieves the life of the son, but promises him a numerous and illustrious issue; promises to make him the progenitor of the Messiah, and thereby a public blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Tell me now, Theron, was there ever such an astonishing effort of obedience? such a perfect prodigy of resignation? "Yet this hath faith done."† If you should ask, How was it possible for Abraham to perform all this, in the manner described? The answer is obvious: Because Abraham believed; or, in other words, was fully persuaded, that the God who

* Upon this most seasonable interposition, the inspired historian makes a very judicious and edifying remark; which seems to be greatly obscured, if not entirely spoiled, by our translation: "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen." I must confess, I have always been puzzled to find, not only a pertinent sense, but any sense at all, in these words. Whereas the original is as clear in its signification, as it is apposite to the purpose. "In the mount the Lord will be seen;" or, "In the mount the Lord will provide." *q. d.* "This memorable event gave rise to, at least is an eminent exemplification of, that proverbial expression which is commonly used at this day. In the mount of difficulty, or in the very crisis of need, when matters seem to be irretrievable and desperate, then the Lord appears as a present help. Man's extremity is God's opportunity." See Gen. xxii. 14.

† Heb. xi. 17. "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." The faith, of which such glorious things are spoken, to which such admirable achievements are ascribed, through this whole chapter, was a *faith in* "*the* seed of the woman," the promised Messiah.

had given him this son from the barren womb, was able to raise him again from the smoking ashes.* As the same God who required this sacrifice had expressly declared, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," the patriarch doubted not but the promise would, in a way known to infinite Wisdom, be punctually accomplished. Hence he made no dispute, and felt no reluctance. His faith banished every uneasy apprehension; and neither fear nor sorrow had place in his breast. By faith he was enabled, speedily and cheerfully, without so much as a parting tear, to obey this unparalleled precept.

And if all this, which would otherwise have been utterly impracticable, was wrought by faith, you need not suspect of weakness and insufficiency so approved a principle. Far from enervating, it will invigorate every good disposition; and instead of damping, will give life to every religious duty. Cherish faith, and you will of course cultivate obedience. Water this root, and the branches of universal godliness will assuredly partake the beneficial effects; will spread their honours, and bring forth their fruits. Through the power of faith, the saints have wrought righteousness, in all its magnanimous and heroic acts. The doctrine of faith is called by St Paul "a doctrine according to godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3.; exquisitely contrived to answer all the ends, and secure every interest, of real piety. The grace of faith St Jude styles "our most holy faith," Jude ver. 20.; intimating, that it is not only productive of holiness, but that the most refined and exalted holiness arises from this stock.

Let us then be diligent to exercise, and careful to increase, faith in Jesus Christ. Let us maintain the same zealous solicitude for this leading capital grace, as the renowned Epaminondas expressed for his shield. When that gallant general was, in an en-

* He seems to have expected not only the certain, but the immediate restoration of his slain son; that he should be revived on the very spot, *before* he left the place, so as to accompany his return. For he says to *his servants*, not I, but we will go, and worship, and return, ver. 5.

gagement with the enemy, struck to the ground, his soldiers carried him off, breathless and fainting, to his tent. The very moment he opened his eyes, and recovered the use of speech, he asked—not whether his wound was mortal, nor whether his troops were routed, but whether his shield was safe?—May we be enabled, my dear friend, to keep our shield safe! May we be strong, be steady, be lively in faith! Then I doubt not we shall give glory to God, receive comfort to ourselves, and abound in the works of the Lord.

Nothing can be more pertinent to my purpose than the apostle's prayer: "That we may know what is the hope of our calling in Christ Jesus, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to themward who believe." And nothing can be more expressive of the very soul of your affectionate ASPASIO.

LETTER XII.—ASPASIO TO THERON.

DEAR THERON,—IT is very probable, while I am reading yours, you are perusing mine. But how unlike is my friend to the representation he receives! How unlike the satisfied, unsuspecting, cheerful Abraham! Why this dejected air in your temper? why those pensive strokes in your letter? Let me anticipate your reply, and make answer to myself. This gloom, I trust, is a sign of approaching day. Just before the morning dawn, the nocturnal darkness is blackest: And just before the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness, the penitent's distress is frequently the deepest. I promise myself, the hour is at hand which will "put off your sackcloth, and gird you with gladness."

Another favourable presage is, that you take the direct and certain way to obtain substantial comfort. The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, after which you inquire, about which you are solicitous, is a never-failing spring of consolation: because it

acquits from all sin; secures from all condemnation; and renders the believer unblamable and unreproveable in the sight of God. Therefore says the Holy Ghost, "His name is as ointment poured forth," Cant. i. 3.; even that divinely precious name, by which he has been celebrated in the preceding epistles; by which he is distinguished in the Scriptures of truth; by which, I hope, he will be more and more revealed in my Theron's mind,—"The Lord our Righteousness." The discovery of him under this most amiable and glorious capacity, will indeed be like breaking open a vial of the richest unguents; which not only fill the room, and regale the sense with their delightful fragrance, but refresh the spirits, and "rejoice the very heart." Might my writing, or my discourse, be as the alabaster box, to contain, to convey, and present these reviving odours; how highly should I think myself honoured, and how signally my endeavours blessed!

You ask, "How this righteousness of the divine Redeemer becomes ours?" It is a question which I receive with the utmost pleasure; and, with equal pleasure, shall attempt an answer. Or rather, as the Spirit of our God prompted the first, may the same unerring guide suggest the last! This he has abundantly done by his prophets and apostles; so that I need only have recourse to their writings, and collect some of the hints which lie treasured up in those storehouses of wisdom.

There we are often told of union with Christ. Believers are said to be "in Christ," Col. 1. 2.; and to be "one with Christ," Heb. ii. 11. What is still higher, and implies a greater degree of nearness, they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. v. 30. And, which denotes the most intimate connexion imaginable, "They that are joined to the Lord Jesus are one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17.) with him! As these expressions appear dark, and their sense lies deep, it has pleased our all-condescending Instructor to illustrate them by a variety

of significant types and lively similitudes. This remark very opportunely reminds me of an engagement which, some time ago, I undertook to execute, but have hitherto omitted—to make it evident, that the blessed doctrine for which we have been pleading, is "deducible from several Scripture images." A short descant upon some of the principal, will, I hope, at once discharge my former obligation, and satisfy your present inquiry.

This was shadowed forth by the costly, odoriferous, flowing unguent, poured upon Aaron's head; "which ran down upon his beard, and descended to the skirts† of his clothing," Psal. cxxxiii. 2. So the merits of our great High-priest are derived down to all the faithful; even those of the meanest station in life, and the lowest attainments in religion.

Was it not typified by that instructive vision which the prophet Zechariah saw? "I have looked, and behold! a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof; and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof; which, through two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves," Zech. iv. 2, 3. 12. The bowl and the lamps were a proper emblem of believers; who are, by nature, dry vessels, and destitute of all good; yet should shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The olive-trees, arrayed in verdure, and abounding with sap; always emptying themselves, yet ever full; are a very just representation of Christ, of his unchangeable love, and his inexhaustible grace. The golden pipes, through which the olive-branches transmit their oil, seem to be figurative of faith, in its various and repeated actings. By these channels of conveyance, the unspeakable benefits of a Redeemer are communicated to our souls, and replenish those empty basins.

† What we render *skirts*, is, in the original, *the mouth*, or, as the *word is translated Job* xxx. 18. *the collar* of his garments.

Another type the apostle mentions: "The first Adam," he says, "was a figure of him that was to come," Rom. v. 14. So eminent a figure, and corresponding in so many instances, that he styles our "Lord Jesus the last Adam," 1 Cor. xv. 45. And why? Because, like the first, he was a covenant-head to his people, and transacted in their stead. Insomuch that what he did, and what he suffered, both are placed to their account. Is Adam's sin imputed to all his natural offspring? So is Christ's righteousness to all his spiritual seed. The consequences of both render the doctrine more intelligible, and the truth more undeniable. All men are "judged, condemned, dead," Rom. v. 15, 16.; doomed inevitably to the death of the body, and justly liable to the death of the soul, on the score of Adam's transgression. All believers are "acquitted, justified, saved," Rom. v. 19. 21.; saved from the first death, and made heirs of the resurrection; saved from the second death, and entitled to life eternal, by virtue of Christ's obedience.

This union with Christ was not only prefigured by types, but is displayed by a variety of similitudes taken from the most familiar occurrences of life; by which it appears to be our divine Master's will, that we should live under the habitual belief of this momentous truth, and in the constant enjoyment of this distinguished privilege.—You cannot visit a friend, or view your children; you cannot enter your garden, discourse with your spouse, or contemplate your own body, without a representation and a remembrancer of this precious blessing.

Christ says to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends," John xv. 15. Friends are a second self. St Paul, speaking of Onesimus, uses this remarkable phrase, "Receive him as myself;" and, which is still more emphatical, "Receive him, that is mine own bowels," Philem. 12. 17. Is not Christ's friendship of the most tender and exalted kind? Doubtless it must be equal, doubtless it must be superior to Jonathan's.—Jonathan loved David as

his own soul: But Christ loved sinners with a love stronger than death. They were dearer to him than his own inestimable life.—Jonathan exposed himself to imminent danger in vindicating David's conduct. Jesus surrendered himself to certain death in making reconciliation for our offences.—Jonathan interceded once and again with his father in David's behalf. Christ ever liveth, to plead his blood, and make intercession for transgressors.—" Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, to give it to David, and his garment, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle," 1 Sam. xviii. 4. Our Redeemer, without stripping himself, has clothed us (such is the prerogative of a divine person !) with the robe of his righteousness, and with the garment of his salvation. He has consigned over to us all the merit of his holy life and propitiatory death.

Christ stands related to his people, not as a friend only, but as a parent. He is called by a prophet, " The everlasting Father," Isa. vi. 9.; and we are said by an apostle to be his " children," Heb. ii. 13. Children look upon themselves as interested in the wealth of their parents. They expect, and not without reasonable ground, to reap benefit from it while the parents live, and to become possessors of it when they die. Accordingly, the father says in the gospel, " Son, all that I have is thine," Luke xv. 31. Since the high and holy Emmanuel vouchsafes to be our Father, can we suppose him less generous than an earthly parent? or can we imagine that his children shall have less to hope than the heirs of an earthly progenitor? May we not, ought we not, to regard all his communicable goods, all the benefits resulting from his meritorious sufferings and perfect obedience, as our portion? Especially, since he is the testator also, Heb. ix. 17.; has bequeathed them to us by will, and, having submitted to death, they become legally ours.

" I am the vine," says our Lord, " ye are the branches," John xv. 5. They who believe, are in-

grafted into Christ. Take notice of a scion. What are the consequences of its ingrafture? It is embodied with the substance of the tree, and partakes of its fatness. The sap, imbibed by the root, circulates into it, gives it vegetable life, fills it with buds, decks it with blossoms, and loads it with fruit. If then we are one with Christ, as much as the branch is one with the stock, it must follow, even upon the principles of common experience, that his wisdom is ours, to enlighten us; his righteousness is ours, to justify us; his Spirit is ours, to sanctify us; his redemption is ours, to make us completely and eternally happy.

Christ is united to his people by a tie closer and dearer than the parental. They are not only his children, but his spouse. He is often called their bridegroom, and is not ashamed to avow the tender engagement: "I will betroth thee to me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness," Hos. ii. 19, 20. The condescending God multiplies, diversifies, accumulates his words; and this with admirable propriety, as well as surpassing goodness. The honour is so high, and the favour so great, we should hardly know how to believe it, and hardly venture to apply it. Lest, therefore, by a single expression, it should not be sufficiently established, it stands ratified by repeated asseverations, and with all the energy of language; so that, be the grace ever so astonishing, we are assured the fact is equally certain: he that is our Maker, is also our Husband, Isa. liv. 5.

Let us consider what follows upon such an union. We may take for an example the case of Boaz and Ruth. Soon as their nuptials were solemnized, she that was poor became rich; from a gleaner in the field she commenced mistress of the harvest; and from abiding by the maidens had a seat at the master's table. And if we are united to Christ by a marriage-contract, the same effects will take place. We that were poor, are rich in him; we who had nothing,

possess all things in Christ; we that dwell in dust, are made to sit together with our divine Husband in heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6.

If you chuse some modern exemplification, what can be more pertinent than the remarkable instance of your neighbour Arietta? She was lately left a widow by the dissolute and extravagant Bellario; her circumstances miserably embarrassed, and the little estate deeply mortgaged; her friends looked shy, and her creditors became clamorous; scarce a day passed but it made some new discovery of debts contracted by the deceased; so that the affairs of the survivor appeared with a more melancholy aspect, and in a less retrievable condition. But having won, first the compassion, then the affection, of the wealthy and illustrious Philander; how happily is the face of things altered! All her debts devolve upon him, and all his dignity is derived to her. He stands responsible for whatever she owes; and she is a sharer in whatever he possesses. Though little less than ruined by her late husband, she is more than restored by her present; and has reason to rejoice in his affluence, and to glory in his honours. Have not we also reason to rejoice in our heavenly Bridegroom—since a far more glorious exchange subsists between him and his mystical spouse? He has bore the curse, that we may inherit the blessing. Sin was charged on him, that righteousness might be imputed to us. In a word, he has sustained all our miseries, that he might impart to us all his benefits. Has the law any demand? It must go to him for satisfaction. Have we any wants? We may look to him for a supply; to him, Theron, "in whom it has pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19.

If any thing can express an union more intimate and inseparable than the conjugal, it is that of the members with the head. And this image is used by the Holy Ghost, to shadow forth the connexion between Christ and the faithful. He is the "head over all things," with respect to rule and supremacy, but

a head of union and influence, with respect "to the church," Eph. i. 22. The head and the members constitute one natural, Christ and his church compose one mystical body. What kindness is done, what injury is offered to the members, the head regards them as done to itself. Accordingly, Christ says to the outrageous Saul, who made havock of the church, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. 4. He declares, concerning those indigent Christians to whose necessities we administer relief; "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto them, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40. The animal spirits formed in the head, are formed for the benefit of the whole body, and designed for the use of all the members. So the righteousness wrought by Jesus Christ, is wrought out for his whole mystical body, and intended for the advantage of all his people; to be the cause of their justification, and the purchase of their salvation.

Being then so nearly related, so closely united to the blessed Jesus, it is no wonder that believers are now loved with the same fatherly love, and will hereafter be partakers of the same heavenly glory. What might we not expect from the divine Redeemer, if he vouchsafed to acknowledge but one of these endearing names? Since he has engaged himself to us by all the ties of affinity and affection, may we not promise ourselves, and with the assurance of hope, every good thing; "even all the fulness of God," our Saviour? Eph. iii. 19. Does not each of these tender relations, subsisting between Christ and his saints, imply an entire property in one another, and a mutual participation of all that belongs to either?—"My beloved is mine, and I am his,"—I dare not say, is the posy of the mystical ring; but it is the undoubted effect of this divine union.

How pleasing, yet how amazing the thought! Shall we, who say to corruption, "Thou art my father;" and to the worm, "Thou art my mother and *my* sister," Job xvii. 14.; shall we be permitted to

say, concerning the Head of all principality and power, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?" Eph. v. 30. What a mercy might we esteem it, not to be confounded before a Majesty so exalted and sublime! What a favour, to obtain the least propitious regard from the King immortal and invisible! What an honour, to be admitted into his family, and numbered among the meanest of his servants! But to be his adopted children; to be his espoused bride; to be the members of his sacred body; to have him for our everlasting Father, him for the bridegroom of our souls, him for our heavenly head, who is the Maker of all worlds, and the Sovereign of all creatures! What words can duly celebrate, what heart can sufficiently admire, the condescension and the love of our adorable Jesus? or who can justly question the fruits of such a fellowship, and the consequences of such an union? Question them! No, the fruits are infallibly sure, as the privilege is inexpressibly great.

Let me once again introduce a great and venerable witness of both these truths: "Laban spake high when he said, 'These children are mine, and all these things thou seest are mine.' But how high and glorious is that which may be said of a justified person: All thou hearest of Christ is thine; his life is thine, his death is thine, his obedience, merit, spirit, all thine!"* Rich and important words! than which nothing can give us a juster or fuller explanation of the apostle's assertion, "We are partakers of Christ," Heb. iii. 14.

When some foreign ladies, of the first quality, paid a visit to Leonidas' queen, the talk turned upon their rich clothes, their costly jewels, and splendid equipage. After they had severally displayed each her own grandeur, they inquired after her majesty's finery—what she had to distinguish her from the vulgar? She replied, "My illustrious husband." What else? "My illustrious husband." And as

* *See Dr Lightfoot's Works, vol. ii. p. 1077.*

often as they repeated the same question, she returned the same answer. Could this queen speak in such admiring, rejoicing, self-gratulating terms of her royal consort? And shall not vile sinners look upon their Redeemer—that all-glorious, yet all-condescending bridegroom, who is full of grace and truth, full of merit and righteousness—shall not they much more look upon him as their honour and their joy; the object of their dependence, and the cause of their boasting?

I should find it difficult to refrain from the farther prosecution of so engaging a topic, did I not propose to wait upon my Theron very speedily. Then I shall have an opportunity of pouring into his bosom all the fulness of my heart with regard to this delightful subject. In the mean time, let me exhort my dear friend to be of good comfort. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psal. xxx. 5. This sorrow, of which you complain, may be the seed of spiritual and eternal consolation.

While I am writing, there appears full in my view one of the finest rainbows I ever beheld. "It compasseth the heavens with a glorious circle;" so glorious, that it is no disparagement of the Almighty Creator to say, "The hands of the Most High have bended it," Eccl'us. xliii. 12. On what foundation, would I ask, is that stately and beautiful arch raised? from what source do all its radiant and lovely colours spring? It is raised on a gloomy assemblage of vapours, and all its rich tinctures spring from a lowering cloud. Thus does the blessed God, on a conviction of guilt and a sense of ruin, spread faith, plant holiness, and diffuse gladness. May all these, ere long, arise in my Theron's breast! and each be bright as that resplendent bow; lasting as the sun that creates it!

In the mean time, it is the ardent wish of my soul, and shall be my frequent prayer to God, "That both our hearts may be comforted, being knit together in *love*, unto all riches of the full assurance of under-

standing," Col. ii. 1. in this great mystery of godliness. What vigour of expression, what exuberance of ideas, and, above all, what distinguished privileges are here! —*Assurance*,—*full* assurance,—*riches* of the full assurance,—*all* riches of the full assurance of understanding,—in reference to our union with Christ, and its unutterably precious effects! Can the orator express more? can the sinner desire more? can the saint—I had almost said, can the archangel enjoy more?—May this be the portion of my dear Theron, and of his ever faithful ASPASIO.

DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUE XV.

ASPASIO had taken leave of his friend Camillus, and was come to revisit Theron, whose thoughts seemed to be in a state of much fluctuation, and no small anxiety; hoping that some proper conversation on the grace and privileges of the everlasting gospel might compose and comfort his mind; might, while his heart was softened by humbling convictions, fix the stamp of genuine Christianity, and deliver his whole soul into the mould * of evangelical religion.

> When sorrows wound the breast, as ploughs the glebe,
> And hearts obdurate feel her softening shower,
> Her seed celestial then glad Wisdom sows—
> Her golden harvests triumph in the soil. *Night Thoughts.*

He arrived pretty late in the evening, and being

* *Deliver into the mould.*—This is the literal translation, and exact sense of St Paul's phrase, Εις ον παρεδοθητε τυπον διδαχης, Rom. vi. 17. which, as it contains a beautiful allusion, conveys also a very instructive admonition; intimating, that our minds, all pliant and ductile, should be conformed to the refined precepts of the gospel, as liquid metals take the figure of some elegant mould into which they are cast.

somewhat weary with the journey, soon withdrew to his repose. The next morning, as Theron walked abroad to taste the cool delights of the dawn, he was agreeably surprised by meeting Aspasio.

Ther. So soon awake, my worthy friend! and after so much fatigue on the preceding day! I had not the least expectation of your company till breakfast. Then, indeed, I promised myself a double regale; the refreshments exhibited on the table, and those "wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Tim. vi. 3. which, more precious than manna, drop——

Asp. How, Theron! Have you also learned those soothing arts which polish the speech, to deprave our sentiments? Could I have suspected the enchanting wiles of flattery from my sincere, my tried, my bosom friend!

Ther. Your friend is still sincere, and his words are very remote from flattery.—How welcome to the wind-bound mariner, weary with expectation and sick with disappointments, is the visit of a propitious gale! How welcome to the fields, parched with drought and gasping for moisture, are copious showers of rain! How acceptable to the Israelites, travelling through the inhospitable desert, and pining away for want of the fruits of the earth, was the miraculous supply of heavenly bread! Yet neither propitious gales to the wind-bound mariner, nor copious showers to the thirsty soil, nor heavenly bread to the famished Israelites, could be more welcome than your late conversation, and later correspondence, to my anxious soul.

Asp. Why, I thought you looked upon my notions as chimerical. Is Theron also become credulous? Like one of us weak-headed believers, has he quitted the strongholds of reason? is he vanquished by the sling-stone of faith? or can he submit to this strange method of salvation, by embracing the righteousness and relying on the obedience of another?

Ther. I find my reason was a feeble guide, or I *myself* not faithful to its genuine dictates. I was

blinded with prejudice; I was intoxicated with pride; a vain conceit of my moral powers betrayed me, as I fear it has betrayed many, into a contempt of the evangelical righteousness. I held what I thought an honour to human nature. I now retract my opinion: I now perceive, that as my natural light could not discover the way, neither can my personal obedience put me in possession of life and salvation. My true glory, and real happiness, I would henceforth derive from the blessed Jesus. No more banter, Aspasio: —have done:—I am serious, and very much in earnest; so much in earnest, that if all my acquaintance of the Pharisaical turn, or if all my brothers of the smile, should rally me on the subject, I would frankly acknowledge my error, and as freely sign my recantation.

Asp. My dear Theron, I applaud your resolution. You have no more cause to be ashamed of such a practice, than Philip had to be ashamed of the imperfection in his limbs; when, being observed to go lame with a wound received in battle, he had this consolation suggested by one of his courtiers: "Never blush, my royal Sir, for a defect which puts you in mind of your valour every step you take." To sacrifice our prejudices in the search of truth, is no less honourable than to be marked with a scar in the defence of our country.

I beg pardon for my pleasantry. Since you are so very serious, a gay air was quite unseasonable. You cannot often complain that I am guilty of this fault. Nor can you easily imagine the satisfaction I shall enjoy, if either my letters or my discourse have administered any advantage to my friend. I shall note it down among the distinguished blessings of my life; and have an additional obligation to love the beneficent Author of all good.

But as I cannot be a furtherer of your happiness without the greatest delight, so I cannot be a witness of your solicitude without a painful regret. You must therefore permit me to ask the cause of that unusual

vehemence which I observe in your speech, and of that deep concern which I read in your countenance.

Ther. I have been considering very attentively, what is the present state, and what is likely to be the final condition of my soul.

> ———My hopes and fears
> Start up alarm'd; and o'er life's narrow verge
> Look down—on what? A fathomless abyss,
> A vast eternity!

My sins, at the same time, like an armed host, are set in dreadful array, and surround me on every side. Justice, like an injured and incensed foe, unsheathes the sword, and makes a loud demand for vengeance. No righteousness of my own presents itself, to which I may fly for refuge. The method of salvation, in which I formerly confided, is a bridge broken down; and leaves me, without any possibility of escape, abandoned to the approaching enemy.

To a person in such deplorable circumstances, how reviving, how delightful, is the very thought of being interested in the great Redeemer's righteousness! I do not wonder now at a saying of Luther's, which I have sometimes exploded as strangely extravagant: "That, upon the discovery of this glorious righteousness, the gates of Paradise seemed to fly open before him, and the dawn of heaven was all in view."

Talking in this manner, they came to an elevated terrace; which, about an hour before, had been shaved by the scythe, and emitted all the freshness of new-mown herbage. On one side, a fine champaign country stretched its wide dimensions; on the other, a flower-garden exhibited the last ornaments of the year. Here you might still see the tufted vermilion, and the full-blown ivory, glittering through spangles of liquid crystal. There you might trace the footsteps of the early cattle, by many a recent print on the dewy lawn. On the walls and espaliers autumn had spread her stores, and was beginning to beautify their rinds with many a ruddy streak, or to breathe over *their glossy* skins her delicate and inimitable bloom.

Asp. See, said Aspasio, the wisdom and benignity which, in amiable and inseparable conjunction, display themselves through the whole economy of the universe: "God has made every thing beautiful in his time," Eccl. iii. 11. every thing serviceable in its place. A little while ago, the flowery meads delighted our eyes, and the melodious birds charmed our ears; now, the tasteful fruits are preparing their dainties, and presenting us with a collation to regale our palate. The whole earth, and all the seasons, are rich with our Creator's goodness. Yea, the whole earth, and all that replenishes it, all that surrounds it, are full of his presence. He it is who

> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
> Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent. POPE'S *Eth. Epist.*

An habitual belief of this truth gives nature her loveliest aspect, and lends her the most consummate power to please. The breath of violets, and the blush of roses; the music of the woods, and the meanders of the stream; the aspiring hill, the extended plain, and all the decorations of the landscape, then appear in their highest attractives, then touch the soul with the most refined satisfaction, when God is seen, when God is heard, and God enjoyed in all. Is Theron lost in thought, and deprived of speech? Is he alone silent while all things speak their Maker's praise? Does faith throw a shade over the works of creation? Does it not heighten their beauties and enliven their graces? The religious is the only true philosopher; and the pleasures of imagination never acquire their proper relish, till they are ripened by the exercise of devotion. With this view then, since my friend forbears, let me attempt to speak; not to increase his knowledge, but to cherish faith, and cultivate devotion in us both.

The spacious canopy* over our heads, is painted

* What Aspasio calls the *canopy*, Isaiah describes by כרק, which we translate "as a curtain;" but the exact signification is, *Sicut tenue, vel tenuissimum quid;* "Like some finely-attenuated expanse."

with blue; and the ample carpet under our feet, is tinged with green. These colours, by their soft and cheering qualities, yield a perpetual refreshment to the eye: whereas, had the face of nature glistened with white, or glowed with scarlet; such ardent and dazzling hues would, instead of exhilarating, have fatigued the sight. Besides, as the several brighter colours are interspersed, and form the pictures in this magnificent piece, the green and the blue constitute an admirable ground, which shews them all in their highest lustre, and to the utmost advantage.

Had the air been considerably grosser, it would have dimmed the rays of the sun, and darkened the cheerful day; our lungs had been clogged in their vital functions; men had been suffocated, without the strangling noose; or drowned, without the overwhelming flood. Was it several degrees more subtile, birds would not be able to wing their way through the firmament; nor could the clouds be sustained in so attenuated an atmosphere. It would elude the organs of respiration; we should gasp for breath, with as much difficulty, and with as little success, as fishes out of their native element.

The ground also is wrought into the most proper temperature. Was it of a firmer consistence, it would be impenetrable to the plough, and unmanageable by the spade. Was it of a laxer composition, it would be incapable of supporting its own furniture. The light mould would be swept away by whirling winds; or the oozy glebe soaked into sloughs by the descending rains. Because every situation suits not every plant, but that which is a nurse to one often proves a stepmother to others; therefore the qualities of the earth are so abundantly diversified, as properly to accommodate every species of vegetation. We have a variety of intermediate soils, from the loose disjointed sand, to the stiff cohesive clay; from the rough projections of the craggy cliff, to the softly swelling bed of the smooth parterre.

The sea carries equal evidences of a most wise and

gracious ordination. Was it larger, we should want land for the purposes of pasturage and the operations of husbandry. We should be destitute of sufficient room for mines and forests; our subterranean warehouses, and our aerial timber-yards. Was it smaller, it would not be capable of recruiting the sky with a proper quantity of vaporous exhalations, nor of supplying the earth with the necessary quota of fructifying showers.

Do we not discern very apparent strokes of skill, and the most pregnant proofs of goodness, in each individual object? in the various tenants of the globe, and the several appurtenances of this great dwelling? It is needless to expatiate upon the more eminent and conspicuous beauties—all that shines in the heavens, and all that smiles on the earth. These speak to every ear, these shew to every eye, the adorable munificence of their Maker. It is needless to launch into the praises of the valleys, delicately clothed with herbage; or of the fields, richly replenished with corn. Even the ragged rocks, which frown over the flood; the caverned quarries, which yawn amidst the land; together with the mountains, those shapeless and enormous protuberances, which seem to load the ground and encumber the skies; even these contribute their share to increase the general pleasure, and augment the general usefulness. They variegate the prospect; raise an agreeable horror in the beholder; and inspire his breast with a religious awe. They add new charms to the wide level of our plains; and shelter, like a screen, the warm lap of our vales.

We are delighted with the solemn gloom and magnificent aspect of the forest. One who saw the cedars of Lebanon, was transported with admiration at their ample trunks and towering heads, their diffusive spread and verdant grandeur; compared with which the stately elm is but a reed, and the branching oak a mere shrub. Was our sight qualified for the search, we should discover a symmetry and a dignity altogether as perfect, and far more wonder-

ful, in those groves of moss* which adhere to the rude stone: we should contemplate with greater surprise, if not with greater rapture, those diminutive plantations, which strike their hasty roots in the mouldy confection, or wave their curious umbrage over the perished pickle.†

Who is not charmed with the vine, and its generous warming juices? with the melon, and its delicious cooling pulp? Yet, were all our trees to produce fruits of such exalted qualities, or of such an agreeable relish, what would become of the birds? How small a scantling of such choice delicacies would voracious man resign to their enjoyment? That provision may be made for the meanest vagrant of the air, as well as for the most renowned sovereign of a nation, there is, in all places, a large growth of shrubs, covered annually with a harvest of coarse and hardy berries; so coarse in their taste, that they are unworthy of the acceptance of man; so hardy in their make, that they endure the extremest severities of the weather, and furnish the feathered tribe with a standing repast, amidst all the desolations of winter.

The fir, with her silver bark and shapely cone; the beech,‡ with her quivering leaves and embower-

* See, for a proof of this remark, the explanation of the tenth plate in the "Micrographia Restaurata;" where our author compares the size of this little vegetable, with the dimensions of those vast trees which grow in the vigorous climates of Guinea and Brasil; the trunks of which are, according to the report of travellers, twenty feet in diameter, whereas the body of this minute plant measures no more than the sixtieth part of an inch. So that, upon a calculation, the thickness of the former exceeds that of the latter, 2,985,984 times. So prodigiously various are the works of the Creator.

† That whitish kind of down, which shags the putrefying pickle, which incrusts the surface of some corrupted liquors, and constitutes what we call mouldiness, is really a cluster of little plants. Each has a root and a stalk; each spreads its branches, and produces seed in abundance.

Radicesque suas habet, exilemque coronam,
Frondesque, fructumque gerit, velut ardua quercus.

‡ The fir, the beech, and such like trees, are called in Hebrew, אדרלים, Isa. vii. 19. Which word is rendered, but I think very improperly, *bushes*. It rather signifies the grand and most admired *plants*.

ing shade, are stately decorations of our rural seats. But, if there were no entangling thickets, no prickly thorns, where would the farmer procure fences so closely wattled, or so strongly armed? How could he guard the scene of his labours, or secure his vegetable wealth from the flocks and the herds—those roving plunderers, which accede to no treaty, but that of forcible restraint; submit to no laws, but those of the coercive kind?

Most people are fond of the purslane's fleshy leaves, and the ramified fatness of the brocoli; the potato's mealy orbs, and the lentile's succulent pods. We spare no toil, we grudge no expense, to have them flourish in our gardens, and served up at our tables. But there are innumerable herbs, which pass under the contemptible character of weeds, and yet are altogether as desirable to many classes of creatures as these culinary gifts to mankind. Who shall be at the pains to plant, to water, to cultivate, such despicable productions? Man would rather extirpate than propagate these encumbrances of his acres. Therefore Providence vouchsafes to be their gardener. Providence has wrought off their seeds into such a lightness of substance, that they are carried abroad with the undulations of the air; or, if too heavy to be wafted by the breeze, they are fastened to wings of down, which facilitate their flight; or else are enclosed in a springy case, which, forcibly bursting, shoots and spreads them on every side. By some such means the reproducing principle is disseminated, the universal granary is filled, and the universal board furnished. The buzzing insect, and the creeping worm, have each his bill of fare. Each enjoys a never-failing treat, equivalent to our finest venison, or to "the fat of kidneys of wheat,"* Deut. xxxii. 14.

* A sentence rich with elegance! such as would have shone in Pindar, or been admired by Longinus. Yet, I believe, its principal beauty consists in an allusion to a remarkable Jewish rite. In every sacrifice, the fat of the kidneys was, as the most delicious part of the victim, set apart for God, and consumed on his altar. Here even the com-

As the seeds of some plants are most artfully scattered abroad when ripe, the seeds of others are most carefully guarded till they come to maturity; and, by both contrivances, every species is not barely preserved, but in a manner eternized. Some are lodged in the centre of a large pulp, which is at once their defence and their nourishment. This we find exemplified in the tasteful apple and the juicy pear. Some, besides their surrounding pulp, are enclosed in a thick shell, hard and impenetrable as stone. We cannot pluck and eat one of those downy peaches or encrimsoned nectarines, which so beautifully emboss the wall, without finding a proof of this precaution. Cast your eye upon the walnuts, which stud the branches of that spreading tree. Before these are gathered, the increase of the cold, and the emptiness of the gardens, will sharpen the appetite of the birds. To secure the fine kernel from the depredations of their busy assailing bills, it is fortified with a strong enclosure of wood, and with the addition of a disgustful bitter rind.

If grass was as scarce as the Guernsey lily, or as difficultly raised as the delicate tuberose, how certainly and how speedily must many millions of quadrupeds perish with famine! Since all the cattle owe their chief subsistence to this vegetable, by a singular beneficence in the divine economy, "it waiteth not," like the cornfield and the garden-bed, for the annual labours of man, Mic. v. 7. When once sown, though ever so frequently cropped, it revives with the returning season, and flourishes in a kind of perennial verdure. It covers our meadows, diffuses itself over the plains, springs up in every glade of the forest, and spreads a sideboard in the most sequestered nook.

Since the nutriment of vegetables themselves lies hid under the soil, or floats up and down in the air;

mon people were treated like the Deity. They lay under no restraint, either from the divine prohibition, or the scarcity of the grain; but were copiously supplied, and freely regaled themselves, with the choicest *and finest* part of this first and best of vegetables.

beneath, they plunge their roots into the ground, and disperse every way their fibrous suckers, to explore the latent, and attract the proper nourishment; above, they expand a multitude of leaves, which, like so many open mouths, catch the rains as they fall, imbibe the dews as they distil, and transmit them, through their nice orifices, to the heart of the plant or the lobes of the fruit.

I have touched upon the insensible creation, and pointed out the care of a condescending Providence, exercised over these lowest formations of nature. The animal world, Theron, falls to your share. It is yours to descant upon those higher orders of existence; and shew us the goodness of God extending its indulgent regards to them and their interests, as tenderly, as officiously, as a hen spreadeth her wings over her infant brood.

Ther. The subject is in good hands. Let part the second be of the same strain with part the first, and there will be no occasion to wish for a new speaker. As to myself, I have very little inclination to talk. But I have an ear open and attentive to your discourse.

Asp. You put me in mind of the philosopher who presumed to read a lecture on the art of war in the presence of Hannibal. But his impertinence was voluntary, mine is constrained. Since you enjoin me this office, let us pass from the vegetable to the animal world. Here we shall find no tribe, no individual neglected. The superior classes want no demonstration of their excellent accomplishments. At the first glimpse, they challenge our approbation, they command our applause. Even the more ignoble forms of animated existence are most wisely circumstanced, and most liberally accommodated.

They all generate in that particular season which is sure to supply them with a stock of provision, sufficient both for themselves and their increasing families. The sheep yean, when there is a profusion of nutrimental herbage on the soil, to fill their udders and

create milk for their lambs. The birds lay their eggs, and hatch their young, when myriads of new-born tender insects swarm on every side; so that the caterer, whether it be the male or female parent, needs only to alight on the ground, or make a little excursion into the air, and they find a feast ready dressed, and all at free cost, for the clament mouths at home.

Their love to their offspring, while they continue in a helpless state, is invincibly strong: whereas, the very moment they are able to shift for themselves; when the parental affection would be attended with much solicitude, and productive of no advantage; it vanishes, as though it had never been. The hen which marches at the head of her little brood, would fly in the eyes of a mastiff, or even encounter a lion in their defence. Yet, within a few weeks, she abandons her chickens to the wide world, and not so much as knows them any more.

If the God of Israel inspired Bezaleel and Aholiab with "wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge in all manner of workmanship," Exod. xxxi. 3. the God of nature has instructed the wild and warbling inhabitants of the bough. The skill with which they erect their houses, and adjust their apartments, is inimitable. The caution with which they secrete their abodes from the searching eye, or intruding foot, is admirable. No general, though fruitful in expedients, could plan a more artful concealment. No architect, with his rule and line, could build so commodious a lodgment.

Give the most celebrated artificer the same materials which these weak and inexperienced creatures use; let a Jones, or a De Moivre, have only some rude straws or ugly sticks; a few bits of dirt, or scraps of hair; a sorry lock of wool, or a coarse sprig of moss; and what works, fair with delicacy, or fit for service, could they produce?

We extol the commander who knows how to take advantage of the ground; who can make the sun and *wind fight* for him, as well as his troops; and, by

every circumstance, embarrasses the forces of the enemy, but expedites the action and advances the success of his own. Does not this praise belong to our feathery leaders, who pitch their tent, or (if you please) fix their pensile camp, on the dangerous branches that wave aloft in the air, or dance over the eddies of the stream? By which judicious disposition, the vernal gales rock their cradle, and the murmuring waters lull their young; while both concur to terrify the shepherd, and keep the schoolboy at a trembling distance. Some hide their little household from view, amidst the shelter of entangled furze: Others remove it from reach, in the centre of a thorny thicket: And, by one stratagem or another, they are generally as secure and unmolested in their feeble habitations, as the foxes, which intrench themselves deep in the earth, or as the conies, which retire to the rock for their citadel, Prov. xxx. 26.

If the swan has large sweeping wings, and a copious stock of feathers, to spread over her callow brood; the wren makes up, by contrivance, what is deficient in her bulk. Small as she is, she intends to bring forth, and will be obliged to nurse up, a very numerous issue. Therefore, with the correctest judgment she designs, and with indefatigable assiduity finishes, a nest proper for her purpose. It is a neat rotund, lengthened into an oval, bottomed and vaulted with a regular concave. To preserve it from rain, it has several coatings of moss; to defend it from cold, it has but one window, and only a single door; to render it both elegant and comfortable, it has carpets and hangings of the softest finest down. By the help of this curious mansion, our little lady becomes the mother of multitudes. The vivifying heat of her body is, during the time of incubation, exceedingly augmented. Her house is like an oven, and greatly assists in hatching her young; which no sooner burst the shell, than they find themselves screened from the annoyance of the weather, and most agreeably reposed, amidst the ornaments of a palace, and *the warmth of* a bagnio.

Perhaps we have been accustomed to look upon the insects as so many rude scraps of creation, and to rank them amongst the refuse of things; whereas, if we examine them without prejudice, and with a little attention, they will appear some of the most polished pieces of divine workmanship. Many of them are decked with a profusion of finery. Their eyes are an assemblage* of microscopes, whose mechanism is inconceivably nice, and finished in the highest perfection. Their dress has all the variety and lustre of colours; it is set with an arrangement of the most brilliant gems, and bordered with fringes richer far than the most costly silks. Their wings are the finest expansions imaginable; cambric is mere canvass, and lawn is coarse as sackcloth, compared with those inimitable webs. The cases which enclose their wings glitter with the most glossy varnish; are scooped with ornamental flutings; are studded with radiant spots; or pinked with elegant holes. Not any among them but are equipped with weapons, or endued with dexterity, which qualify them to seize their prey, or escape their foe; to dispatch the business of their respective station, and enjoy the pleasures of their particular condition.

Now I am in a talking humour, give me leave to celebrate the endowments, and assert the honours of my puny clients; yet not so much to support their credit, as to magnify their all-gracious Creator. What if the elephant is distinguished by a huge proboscis?

* The common fly, for instance; who is surrounded with a multitude of dangers, and has neither strength to resist her enemies, nor a place of retreat to secure herself. For which reason, she had need to be very vigilant, and always upon her guard. Yet her head is so fixed, that it is incapable of turning, in order to observe what passes either behind or around her. Providence therefore, surprisingly wise in its contrivances, and equally bountiful in its gifts, has furnished her, not barely with a retinue, but with more than a legion of eyes. Insomuch, that a single fly is supposed to be mistress of no less than eight thousand; every one of which is lined with a distinct optic nerve. By means of this costly and amazing apparatus, the little creature sees on every side, with the *utmost* ease, and with instantaneous speed; even without any motion of *the eye*, or any flexion of the neck.

His meanest relations of the reptile line are furnished with curious antennæ; remarkable, if not for their enormous magnitude, yet for their ready flexibility and acute sensation; by which they explore their way even in the darkest road; they discover and avoid whatever might defile their neat apparel, or endanger their tender lives.

Every one admires that majestic creature the horse; his graceful head, and ample chest; his arching neck, and flowing mane; his cleanly turned limbs, and finely adjusted motions. With extraordinary agility he flings himself over the ditch; and with a rapid career pours himself through the plain. With unwearied application, he carries his rider from one end of the country to another; and, with undaunted bravery, rushes into the fiercest rage, and amidst the thickest havock of the battle. Yet the grasshopper springs with a bound altogether as brisk, if not more impetuous. The ant, in proportion to its size, is equally nimble, equally strong; and will climb precipices which the most courageous courser dares not attempt to scale. If the snail is slower in her motions, she is under no necessity of treading back the ground which she has passed—because her house is a part of her travelling-equipage; and whenever she departs, she is still under her own roof; wherever she removes, is always at home.

The eagle, it is true, is privileged with pinions that outstrip the wind; elevated on which, she looks down on all that soars, and sees flying clouds, and straining wings, far below; her optic nerve so strong, that it meets and sustains the dazzling beams of noon; her wide-surveying glance so keen, that, from those towering heights, it discerns the smallest fish which skulks at the bottom of the river. Yet neither is that poor outcast, the grovelling and gloomy mole, disregarded by divine Providence. Because she is to dig a cell in the earth, and dwell, as it were, in a perpetual dungeon, her paws serve her for a pickaxe and spade. Her eye, or rather her visual speck, is sunk deep into

a socket, that it may suffer no injury from her rugged situation: it requires but a very scanty communication of light, that she may have no reason to complain of her darkling abode. I called her subterranean habitation a dungeon; and some people, perhaps, may think it a grave; but I revoke the expression. It yields her all the safety of a fortified castle, and all the delight of a decorated grotto.

Even the spider, though abhorred by mankind, is evidently the care of all-sustaining Heaven. She is to live upon plunder; to support herself by trepanning the idle, insignificant, sauntering fly. Suitably to such an occupation, she possesses a bag of glutinous moisture. From this she spins a clammy thread, and weaves it into a tenacious net. Expert as any practised sportsman, she always spreads it in the most opportune places. Sensible that her appearance would create horror, and deter the prey from approaching the snare, when watching for sport she retires from sight; but constantly keeps within distance, so as to receive the very first intelligence of what passes in the toils, and be ready to launch, without a moment's delay, upon the struggling captive. And what is very observable, when winter chills the world, and no more insects ramble amidst the air, foreseeing that her labour would be vain, she discontinues her work, and abandons her stand.

I must by no means forget the little monarchy which inhabits the hive. The bees are to subsist, not as a lawless banditti, but as a regular community. It is theirs to earn a decent livelihood by honest industry; not to glut themselves with carnage, or enrich themselves by rapine. For which reason they are actuated by an invariable inclination to society. They possess the truest notions of domestic economy, and have enacted the wisest laws for political government. Their indulgent Creator has made them a present of all necessary implements, both for constructing their combs, and for composing their honey. They have each a portable vessel, with which they bring home

their collected sweets; and they all have the most commodious storehouses, in which they deposit their delicious wares. Though made for peace, they know how to use the sword. They can take up arms with the utmost resolution and intrepidity, when arms are requisite to guard their wealth or repel their foes. Without going through a course of botany, they can readily distinguish every plant which is most likely to yield the materials proper for their business. Without serving an apprenticeship in the laboratory, they are complete practitioners in the art of separation and refinement. They are aware, without borrowing their information from an almanack, that the vernal gleams, and summer suns, continue but for a season. Mindful of this admonition, they improve to the utmost every shining hour; and lay up a stock of balmy treasures, sufficient to supply the whole state, till the blossoms open afresh, and their flowery harvest returns.

Let the peacock boast, if he pleases, his elegant top-knot and lofty mien; his neck adorned with varying dyes, and his train bespangled with a round of stars. Yet let him know, that the despised butterfly, and even the loathed caterpillar, display an attire no less sumptuous, and wear ornaments altogether as genteel, if not quite so magnificent. Does beauty sit in state on that lordly bird? She shines in miniature on the vulgar insect. Is the master of this lower creation ennobled with the powers of reason? The meanest classes of sensitive existence are endued with the faculty of instinct; which gives them a sagacity that is neither derived from observation, nor waits for the finishings of experience; which, without a tutor, teaches them all necessary skill, and enables them, without a pattern, to perform every needful operation; and, what is far more surprising, never misleads them, either into erroneous principles or pernicious practices; never fails them, in the nicest and most arduous of their undertakings.

Can you have patience to follow me if I step into

a different element, and just visit the watery world? Not one among the innumerable myriads which swim the boundless ocean, but is watched over by that exalted eye whose smiles irradiate the heaven of heavens. Not one but is supported by that almighty hand, which crowns angels and archangels with glory. The condescending God has not only created, but beautified them. He has given the most exact proportion to their shape, the gayest colours to their skin, and a polished smoothness to their scales. The eyes of some are surrounded with a scarlet circle; the back of others is diversified with crimson stains. View them when they glance along the stream, or while they are fresh from their native brine, and the burnished silver is not more bright, the radiant rainbow is scarce more glowing, than their vivid, glistering, glossy hues.

Yet, notwithstanding the finery of their apparel, we are under painful apprehensions for their welfare. How can the poor creatures live amidst the suffocating waters? As they have neither hands nor feet, how can they help themselves, or how escape their enemies? We are soon freed from our fears by observing, that they all possess the beneficial, as well as ornamental furniture of fins. These when expanded, like masts above, and ballast below, poise their floating bodies, and keep them steadily upright. We cannot forbear congratulating them on the flexible play and vigorous activity of their tails, with which they shoot themselves through the paths of the sea, more swiftly than sails and oars can waft the royal yacht. But we are lost in wonder at the exquisite contrivance and delicate formation of their gills; by which they are accommodated, even in that dense medium, with the power of breathing, and the benefits of respiration. A piece of mechanism this, indulged to the meanest of the fry; yet surpassing, infinitely surpassing, in the fineness of its structure and the felicity of its operation, whatever is curious in the *works* of art or commodious in the palaces of princes.

Ther. Some persons, Aspasio, have the art of giving dignity to trivial, and spirit to jejune topics. I cannot but listen with a pleased attention to your discourse, though it descends to the lowest scenes and meanest productions of nature.—To make such philosophical remarks, was usually my province; to add the religious improvement, yours. But my thoughts at present are wholly taken up with the consideration of my Saviour's righteousness. I can hardly turn my views, or divert my speech to any other subject. All those amiable appearances of the external creation which I was wont to contemplate with rapture, afford but a languid entertainment to my mind. Till my interest in this divine Redeemer is ascertained, the spring may bloom, the summer shine, and autumn swell with fruits; but it will be winter, cheerless, gloomy, desolate winter in my soul.

Asp. You say, Theron, you attended to my cursory hints. Then your own superior discernment could not but perceive, how every part of the exterior world is adjusted in the most excellent and gracious manner. Not the coarsest piece of inactive matter but bears the impress of its Maker's fashioning skill. Not a single creature, however insignificant, but exhibits evident demonstrations of his providential care. His hand is liberal, profusely liberal, to all that breathes, and all that has a being.

Let me only ask;—and to introduce this question with the greater propriety, to give it a more forcible energy on our minds, was the principal design of the preceding remarks;—let me ask, "Does God take care for oxen?" 1 Cor. ix. 9. Is he a generous benefactor to the meanest animals, to the lowest reptiles? Are his munificent regards extended farther still, and vouchsafed even to the most worthless vegetable? And shall they be withheld from you, my dear friend, and from me? Not one among all the numberless productions which tread the ground, or stand rooted to the soil, wants any convenience that is proper for its respective state. And will his heavenly Father

deny Theron what is so necessary to his present comfort, and his final happiness? Impossible!

Ther. I wish for, but I can hardly hope to partake of that spiritual blessing; which always included my whole happiness, and now engrosses my whole concern.

Asp. "Not hope to partake of!"—What foundation, what shadow of pretence has this desponding temper, either in reason or in Scripture? Is it not evident from the whole book of revelation; is it not apparent through the whole compass of nature, that the almighty Lord "who governeth the world with the palm of his hand," Eccl'us. xviii. 3. is remote, infinitely remote, from a niggardly disposition? He not only provideth for the wants, but even "satisfieth the desire of every living thing," Psal. cxlv. 16.

Consider those stately poppies, which are now the principal ornament of the garden. They have no tongue to request the least favour. Yet the ever-gracious Maker clothes them from his own wardrobe, and decks them with exquisite beauty.—Observe the young ravens, which sit carelessly croaking on yonder boughs. Do they cry for food? Psal. cxlvii. 9. It is in hoarse inarticulate accents: Yet the all-supporting God overlooks their ignorance; hears meaning in their noise; and supplies their every need from his own spontaneous bounty. If he accommodates the former, though incapable of asking; if he attends to the latter, though insensible of their benefactor; can he disregard our pressing wants? will he reject our earnest petitions? especially when we seek such pure and exalted gifts, as it is both his delight and his honour to bestow.

O! my friend, look abroad into universal nature, and look away every disquieting thought.

Ther. Did you inquire what pretence I have for this desponding temper? Alas! I have more than a pretence. I have reason; a reason too obvious—my great unworthiness!

Asp. Pray, where was the worthiness of the stiff-

ıecked Israelites? Yet the Lord "bare them, and arried them, all the days of old," Isa. lxii. 9. Where ras the worthiness of Saul the blasphemer? Yet the lessed Jesus made him a chosen vessel, and set him ıs a signet on his right hand. You deserve nothing ıt the hand of God our Saviour: Neither did Joeph's brethren deserve any kindness from the viceroy of Egypt. Yet he delivered them from famine, who old him to slavery; he settled them in the choicest erritories, who cast him into the horrible pit. He hewed himself a friend and a father to those unnaıural relations who were his actual betrayers, and his intentional murderers. And can you persuade yourself, will you harbour a suspicion, that Christ is less compassionate than Joseph? Shall a frail mortal outvie Emmanuel in beneficence?

Ther. Is not some righteousness of our own indispensably required, in order to our participation of the righteousness of Christ?

Asp. Yes, such a righteousness as the Samaritan woman (John iv. 18.) and Zaccheus the publican possessed; or such as the Philippian jailor, and the profligate Corinthians might boast, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Zaccheus was a man of infamous character, and chief among the extortioners. The jailor was a barbarous persecutor, and in purpose a self-murderer. Yet our Lord says of the former, "This day," without enjoining any course of previous preparation, "is salvation come to thine house," Luke xix. 9. St Paul directs the latter, without insisting upon any antecedent righteousness, "to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ;" and assures the poor alarmed sinner that in so doing he should "be saved," Acts xvi. 31.

So that nothing is required in order to our participation of Christ and his benefits, but a conviction of our need, a sense of their worth, and a willingness to receive them in the appointed way; receive them as the freest of gifts, or as matter of mere grace. "Come and take freely," Rev. xxii. 17. is our Master's language; without staying to acquire any graceful qualities, *is his meaning.*

Ther. Surely, to come without any holiness, without any decent preparative, must be a gross indignity to the divine Jesus. Whoever presents a petition to any earthly sovereign, will think it absolutely necessary not to appear in a slovenly dishabille, much less in filthy raiment. Does not our Lord himself, in the parable of the wedding garment, inculcate this very point, and caution us against a presumptuous approach?

Asp. In the parable you mention, Christ is both the bridegroom, the feast, and the wedding garment, Matth. xxii. 11. And who are invited to an union with this bridegroom? to be guests at this feast? to be arrayed with this wedding garment? The messengers are sent, not to the mansion-houses of the rich, or the palaces of the mighty, but to the highways and hedges; where misery mourns, and poverty pines, and baseness hides her head. To whom is their message addressed? To the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, Luke xiv. 21.; persons who have no amiable or recommending endowments, but every loathsome and disgustful property. Yet these (mark the passage, my dear friend; mark well the encouraging circumstance), these are not only not forbidden, but entreated, importuned; and by all the arts of persuasion, by every weighty or winning motive, compelled to come in. And after all this, surely, it cannot be an act of presumption to accept, but must be a breach of duty to refuse, the invitation.

Ther. You take no notice of the man who was found without a wedding garment, which is by far the most alarming incident, and that which gives me no small uneasiness.

Asp. And does my Theron take proper notice of the divine declaration? "I have prepared my dinner," says the King eternal. "All things are ready," Matth. xxii. 4. "Whatever is necessary for the justification, the holiness, the complete salvation of sinners, is provided in the merit and the grace of my *Son.* Let them come, therefore, as to a nuptial

banquet, and freely enjoy my munificence, and feast their souls with the royal provision."

The man without a wedding garment, denotes the specious superficial professor, who is "called by Christ's name," but has never "put on Christ Jesus by faith." Shall I tell you more plainly whom this character represents? You yourself, my dear Theron, was some months ago in the state of this unhappy creature, when you trusted in yourself, and thought highly of your own, thought meanly of your Saviour's righteousness.

I congratulate my friend on his happy deliverance from so dangerous a condition. You and I are now like the returning prodigal. Let us remember, that he came with no recommendation, either of dress, of person, or of character. None but his nakedness, his misery, and an acknowledgment of vileness, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance. Yet he was received,—received with inexpressible indulgence; and clothed with that first, that best, that divinest robe, Luke xv. 22. the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Let us accustom ourselves to consider this incomparable robe under its evangelical character. It is not a matter of bargain, nor the subject of sale, but a deed of gift: "The gift of righteousness," says the apostle. And gifts, we all know, are not to be purchased, but received.

Ther. Is nothing then, nothing to be done on our part? no heavenly-mindedness to be exercised? no victory over our lusts gained? no fruits of sanctification produced?

Asp. These legal apprehensions, how closely they cleave to my Theron's mind! But I hope the word of God, which pierceth to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, will give the severing blow. And what says that sacred word? It describes the gospel as a will or testament,* Heb. ix. 16, 17.; and all its glo-

* This notion not only runs through the Scriptures, but stands conspicuous even in their title-page.—What are they called? The Old and

rious blessings, as legacies bequeathed by the dying Jesus. When your old acquaintance Charicles left you a handsome legacy, what did you do to establish your title, and make it your own?

Ther. My title was pre-established by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do but to claim, to accept, and to possess.

Asp. Do the very same in the present case. They who believe are heirs, undoubted "heirs of the righteousness which is by faith," Heb. xi. 7. Surely you cannot suppose that Christ's kindness is less sincere, or that Christ's donations are less valid, than those of an earthly testator.

Ther. This illustration hardly reaches the point. I speak not of doing any thing by way of merit, but by way of qualification.

Asp. If there be any qualification, I think it is our extreme indigence. This indeed it will be proper to have; and this, I presume, you are not without. Other qualification, neither reason prescribes nor Scripture requires.

"Reason prescribes no other."—The gifts of the great eternal Sovereign are intended, not to recognize our imaginary worth, but to aggrandize our views of his mercy and grace. To answer such a design, the unworthy and the sinners are duly qualified; nay, are the only qualified persons.

"Scripture requires no other."—The ever-merciful Saviour says not, They are unqualified for my merits; they have no valuable or noble acquirements. But this is his tender complaint: "They will not

The New Testament. What is a testament? An authentic deed, in which estates are transmitted, and legacies bequeathed. In other testaments, some earthly possession; in this, the heavenly patrimony, even all the riches of grace, and the everlasting inheritance of glory. Did we consider the Scriptures in this light, it would be a most engaging invitation, to search them with assiduity and pleasure. What child is willing to continue ignorant of a deceased parent's last will and testament? Who does not covet to know, what honours, hereditaments, and wealth devolve to his enjoyment, by such an interesting and venerable *conveyance*?

come to me,"—just as they are—with all their sins about them, with all their guilt upon them—"that they may have life," John v. 40. Pray take notice of this text, and you will see things placed in a new light, ranged in a new order. Sanctification, heavenly-mindedness, and a victory over our lusts, are not so much the qualities which he requires, as the blessings which he will confer.

Ther. "The unworthy and sinners the only qualified!" Of this expression I cannot but take particular notice. Then Judas should stand in the first rank of qualified persons; and the devout centurion, "whose prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God," was thereby unqualified for the favour of heaven.

Asp. If you observed my expression, I spoke in the hypothetical manner; made a supposition rather than advanced an assertion. If there be any qualification, this is the only one. But, strictly speaking, there is no such thing. The impulsive or inclining cause of all God's favour shewn, of all God's goodness exercised, is—from the creature? No; but from himself, himself alone. "He has mercy," not because this or that person is amiable, is meet, or qualified, but "because he will have mercy." And as for our need of mercy and reconciliation, arising from our sinfulness, this can no more constitute a real qualification for the blessings, than an act of rebellion can qualify for the first honours of the state.

But this we must allow, that such need, such misery, such sinfulness, illustrate the freeness, and manifest the riches of grace. And this we should never forget, that God's first and leading purpose, in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is to demonstrate the sovereignty, and advance the glory of his grace. The Lord, promising a very extraordinary deliverance to Israel, says, "Not for your sakes, be it known unto you, do I this" (Ezek. xxxvi. 32.) signal act of kindness. What then is the inducement? We find it in the following declaration: "I,

even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions, for my own sake,* and according to the good pleasure of my will," Isa. xliii. 25. What is the end of all? "It is for the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. i. 6. A proper motto this for all the displays of divine goodness to sinful men. It has been inscribed by the hand of truth and inspiration. Time and eternity, instead of erasing the lines, will only stamp them deeper, and open them wider.

Ther. This is such a gift! To be interested in all the merits of Christ! to have his immaculate righteousness imputed to my soul! So that from henceforth there shall be no fear of condemnation, but a comfortable enjoyment of freest love, and a delightful expectation of completest glory!

Asp. If this rich donation surpass your very thoughts, and fill you with grateful astonishment, it is so much the better adapted to display what the Scripture very emphatically styles the "abundant," the "superabundant," the "exceeding abundant,"† grace of our God. God hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He is a boundless ocean of love; ever flowing, yet absolutely inexhaustible. See! what an innumerable variety of benefits are transmitted from yonder sun, to gladden all the regions of nature! Yet the sun is but a spark; its highest splendour no more than a shade; its uninterrupted and most profuse communications of light, a poor diminutive scantling, compared with the riches of divine benignity.

The servant in the parable, who owed ten thousand talents, craved only some merciful forbearance; whereas his generous lord remitted the whole sum, and gave him an acquittance in full: "I forgive thee all that debt," Matth. xviii. 32. You wonder, and

* Which teaches us that God, and nothing in the creature, is the original, entire, sole cause of all grace, and every gracious vouchsafement. It is not only by him, and through him, but to him; for the honour of his benign perfections, that we are pardoned, accepted, saved.

† Υπερβαλλουσα χαρις, 2 Cor. ix. 14. Υπερεπερισσευσεν η χαρις, Rom. v. 20. Υπερεπλεονασεν η χαρις, 1 Tim. i. 14.

very deservedly, at such vast generosity. But what had been your admiration to see the noble master admitting this obnoxious slave to a share in his dignity? what if he had made so worthless a wretch the chief of his family, and the heir of his estate? This, perhaps you would say, exceeds the bounds of credibility. Yet God Almighty's stupendous beneficence exceeds all this. He not only spares guilty creatures, but makes them his children; makes them inheritors of his kingdom; and as an introduction to all, or rather as the crown of all, makes them partakers of his Son, Heb. iii. 14.

Ther. The gift is inestimable; of more value than all worlds: It will render me blessed and happy, now and for ever. And may so unworthy a creature look for a blessing thus superlatively excellent?

Asp. Unworthy? my dear friend, dwell no longer upon that obsolete topic. The greatest unworthiness is no objection in Christ's account, when the soul is convinced of sin, and the heart desirous of a Saviour. And as for worthiness, this is as much disavowed by the gospel, as equivocal generation* is exploded by the discoveries of our improved philosophy.

Nay, farther, this notion is diametrically contrary to the gospel, and totally subversive of the covenant of grace.

Ther. In what respect?

Asp. Because it would make our own duty and obedience the terms; whereas the terms were Christ's suffering, and Christ's obedience. These are the hinge on which that great transaction turns, and on which the hope of the world hangs.

Ther. Be more particular, Aspasio.

Asp. The first covenant was made with Adam, for

* The ancients imagined, that many vegetables and insects were produced by, I know not what, plastic power in the sun, and other elements. This is called *equivocal* generation. Whereas the modern philosophers maintain, that every individual of this kind derives its being from some parent vegetable or parent animal. This is styled *univocal* generation.

himself and us. Breaking it, he lost his original righteousness, and became subject to death; was at once a bankrupt and a rebel. Now you cannot suppose, that the Almighty Majesty would enter into a fresh covenant with an insolvent and attainted creature. It pleased, therefore, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity to undertake our cause, to become our Surety, and put himself in our stead. With him the second covenant was made. He was charged with the performance of the conditions; thereby to obtain pardon and righteousness, grace and glory, for all his people. "I have made a covenant with my Chosen One," Psalm lxxxix. 3. is the language of the Most High. And the terms were, (you will permit me to repeat the momentous truth), not your worthiness or mine, but the incarnation, the obedience, the death of God's ever-blessed Son.

Ther. Has man then no office assigned, no part to act, in the covenant of grace?

Asp. He has; but it is a part which my friend seems very loath to discharge. His part is to accept the blessings, fully purchased by the Saviour, and freely presented to the sinner. His part is, not to dishonour the Redeemer's gracious interposition, and infinitely sufficient performance, by hankering after any merit of his own. His part (why will you constrain me to reiterate in this manner?) is, not to bring money in his hand, with the ten brethren; but, with an empty hand, and like an impoverished Lazarus, "to take hold of God's covenant," Isa. lvi. 4.

Ther. If this be the nature of the new covenant, I must confess I have hitherto been ignorant of the gospel.

Asp. And from hence arises your present distress; from hence your averseness to receive comfort. You are a philosopher, Theron, and have been accustomed to examine nicely the proportion of objects, rather than to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. Here you find all proportion swallowed up and lost. This quite overthrows all your conclusions drawn

from the fitness of things. Here man is nothing, less than nothing, while grace is all in all. And should we not, however unworthy in ourselves, magnify the grace of our God?

Ther. Most certainly.

Asp. How can this be done, but by expecting great and superlatively precious blessings from his hand? Alexander, you know, had a famous but indigent philosopher in his court. Our adept in science was once particularly straitened in his circumstances. To whom should he apply but to his patron, the conqueror of the world? His request was no sooner made than granted. Alexander gives him a commission, to receive of his treasurer whatever he wanted. He immediately demands, in his sovereign's name, a hundred talents.* The treasurer, surprised at so large a demand, refuses to comply; but waits upon the king, and represents the affair; adding withal, how unreasonable he thought the petition, and how exorbitant the sum. Alexander hears him with patience; but, as soon as he had ended his remonstrance, replies: "Let the money be instantly paid. I am delighted with this philosopher's way of thinking. He has done me a singular honour; and shewed, by the largeness of his request, what a high idea he has conceived, both of my superior wealth and my royal munificence."

Thus, my dear Theron, let us honour what the inspired penman styles "the marvellous loving-kindness of Jehovah." From the King, "whose name is the Lord of Hosts," let us expect—not barely what corresponds with our low models of generosity, much less what we suppose proportioned to our fancied deserts, but what is suitable to the unknown magnificence of his name, and the unbounded benevolence of his heart. Then we shall cheerfully and assuredly trust, that Christ Jesus will be "made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" that he who hath given himself for us,

* About ten thousand pounds.

Eph. v. 2. will give us of his Spirit, John iv. 13. and will give unto us eternal life, John x. 28.

Ther. Yes, upon condition that we fight the good fight, and finish our course of duty. "Henceforth," says the apostle, after this is done, "there is laid up for me," and for other victorious soldiers, for other faithful labourers, "a crown of righteousness."

Asp. To such persons the crown will assuredly be vouchsafed. But is it vouchsafed on account of their successful warfare, or persevering obedience? If so, "Israel may vaunt themselves, and say, Mine own hand," not the Redeemer's interposition, "hath saved me," Judges vii. 8.

Not to repeat what has already been alleged in opposition to this opinion; not to produce what might farther be urged from a variety of scriptural testimonies; I shall only desire you to observe, what the apostle himself adds in this very place: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." But is this the pay proportionate and due to his own services? is it what he claims and demands on the foot of duty performed? The very title of the reward implies the contrary. It is "a crown of righteousness," because purchased by the meritorious and consummate righteousness of Christ. The action of the Judge declares the contrary: "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." It is, you see, an act of favour; the issue of unmerited bounty; what neither saint, nor martyr, nor apostle enjoys, but only by way of gracious donation, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

I would fain have my Theron form more honourable apprehensions concerning the mercy and the bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will bestow what you suppose he exacts. He is really a benefactor, where you would represent him as a taskmaster. "The Lord will give grace as well as glory." He knows you have neither strength nor merit; therefore he will supply your want of both from his own unfathomable fulness.

Ther. Ah, my Aspasio! you do not know my state.

I have not only no merit, but great guilt; was, by nature, a child of wrath; have been, by practice, a slave of sin; and what is worse, am still corrupt, have still a carnal heart. And has not such a wretch forfeited all title to the divine favour? Nay, does he not deserve the vengeance of eternal fire?

Asp. That we all deserve this misery, is beyond dispute. I am truly glad that we are sensible of our demerit. Here our recovery begins. Now we are to believe, that the Lord Jesus has satisfied divine justice; has paid a glorious price, on purpose to obtain for such ill-deserving, such hell-deserving creatures, all pardon, all holiness, and everlasting happiness. According to the import of that charming Scripture, "When we were enemies (and what is there in an enemy to bespeak favour or deserve benefits?) we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10.

You have great guilt. But is this a reason why you should be excluded from the blessings of the covenant? Contemplate the state of that forlorn and wretched outcast, described in Ezekiel, chap. xvi. An infant "in its blood:" this represents a sinner, who has nothing to excite love, but all that may provoke abhorrence. Yet what says the Holy One of Israel? "When I saw thee"—not washed and purified, and made meet for my acceptance, but—"polluted in thy blood;"* loathsome with defilement, and laden with iniquity; then, even then, "I said unto thee, Live: I spread my skirt over thee; and thou becamest mine." This is the manner of his proceeding, not barely to one nation, but to all his people; not in one period of time only, but through all generations.

You are still corrupt, one that is sensible of his corruption, and acknowledges his sinfulness! Then

* The words are peculiarly emphatical; not only doubled, but redoubled; to denote, at once, the strangeness of the fact, yet the certainty of the favour. "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live," Ezek. xvi. 6.

you are the very person for whom the Saviour's righteousness is intended; to whom it is promised.—You are a governor of the county hospital, Theron. You have been industrious in promoting, and are active in supporting that excellent institution; where medicine with her healing stores, and religion with her heavenly hopes, act as joint handmaids to charity. What are the circumstances which render any persons the proper objects for an admission into your infirmary?

Ther. Their poverty and their distemper. Without poverty, they would not need; and, free from distemper, they would not prize, the benefit of our modern Bethesda.

Asp. Apply this to the case under consideration. The whole world is in a state of spiritual disorder. Christ is styled by the inspired writer, "the Lord our healer," Exod. xv. 26. The gift of his righteousness, the balm of his blood, and the influences of his Spirit, are the sovereign restorative. And sure it cannot be a fanciful persuasion of our health, but a feeling conviction of our disease, which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace. "He came not to call the righteous," the righteous in their own eyes, "but sinners," Matth. ix. 13. self-condemned and ruined sinners, to give them repentance, and pardon, and newness of life.

Ther. But if any foolish and refractory patients have abused our beneficence, it is a standing unalterable rule of the house, never to admit them a second time, however pressing their exigencies, or however powerful their recommender. I have not once only, but through the whole course of my life, abused the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord.

Asp. And is not the Lord superior to all his creatures, in acts of pardon as well as of power? Yes, as those heavens are higher than this prostrate earth, so much more enlarged and extensive is the divine clemency—than the widest sphere of human kindness, shall I say? rather, than the boldest flights of human *imag*ination. Your statutes are inexorable, in case

of one notorious irregularity committed: "But the free gift of a Redeemer's righteousness is vouchsafed, notwithstanding many offences, unto justification," Rom. v. 16. It is the glory of our almighty Ruler, and redounds to the honour of his crucified Son, to pass over, (Prov. xix. 11.) not a single transgression only, but a multitude of provocations; to be altogether as unequalled in mercy, as he is absolutely supreme in majesty.

As it is the grossest pride to entertain high notions of our own accomplishments, or to expect eternal life on the score of our own obedience; so it will be the greatest affront to the grandeur of Christ's merits, and the freeness of his grace, if we suppose our crimes too heinous to be forgiven, or our persons too vile to be accepted.

Theron paused.—These considerations seemed to operate; this anodyne to take effect. Desirous to improve the favourable juncture, and impart the needed consolation, Aspasio added:—

How often did the inhabitants of Jerusalem disregard the warnings, and reject the counsels of our blessed Lord! How justly might he have sworn in his wrath, "They shall never hear the joyful sound of my gospel more. The blessings which they have so wantonly despised, and so wickedly abused, shall be irrevocably withdrawn." Instead of passing such a sentence, this is the charge which, after his resurrection, he gives to his apostles: "Let repentance and remission of sins be preached in my name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," Luke xxiv. 47. "At Jerusalem, Lord! Have not the men of that ungrateful and barbarous city been deaf to thy tenderest importunities? Did they not persecute thee unto condemnation and death? Are not their weapons still reeking, as it were, with thy blood; and their tongues still shooting out arrows, even bitter words, by which they would murder thy character, as they have already crucified thy person?" Yet these wretches (and could any be more inhuman? could any be more

unworthy?) are not only not abhorred, but unto them is the message of grace and the word of salvation sent. Nay, to shew the unparalleled freeness of our Redeemer's grace, these are first upon the heavenly list. The glad tidings of pardon and life, which are to be published through the world, must begin, (amazing mercy!) must begin at Jerusalem.

Ther. Thus much I may venture to profess in my own behalf,—that I long for this blessing; I pray for this blessing; but I cannot see my title to this comprehensive and inestimable blessing clear.

Asp. I behold it perfectly clear. Some days ago a worthy clergyman, who lately came to settle in the neighbourhood, did himself the honour of making one at your table. After dinner you showed him your library; we took a walk in your garden, and made the agreeable tour of the fish-ponds: Then, with that amiable frankness of mien and accent, which is so peculiar to my friend, and exceedingly endears all his favours, you told him, "That he was as welcome to any book in your study, as if the whole collection was his own; that if, on a visit from some acquaintance of superior rank, he should wish to be accommodated with a more delicate entertainment than usual, the productions of your waters, and of your hot-beds, were entirely at his service; and that his acceptance of your offers, without the least shyness or reserve, would be the most pleasing compliment he could pay you on the occasion."

What says the great Proprietor of all good? "If any man," however unworthy his person, or obnoxious his character, "thirst,"—thirst for the blessings of my evangelical kingdom,—"let him come unto me," the fountain of these living waters, "and drink his fill," John vii. 37. You yourself acknowledge that you long for the sacred privileges of the gospel. Your heart is awakened into habitual and lively desires after the salvation of Christ. What is this but, in the spiritual sense, to thirst? To you, therefore, *the promise* is made, to you the riches of this benign *dispensation* belong.

That clergyman has not the least suspicion of being disappointed, in case he should send for a brace of carp from your canal, or a fine melon from your garden. Why is he so confident? Because he has done you any signal service? No; but because you have passed your word, and made the generous offer. And why should you harbour the least doubt concerning the divine veracity? Why should you call in question your right to these heavenly treasures; since it is founded on a grant altogether as free, altogether as clear, as your own indulgent concession, and infinitely more firm than any human engagement? founded on the fidelity of that sublime Being, who "remembers his covenant and promise to a thousand generations."

Ther. It is impossible to confute, yet difficult to believe what you urge.

Asp. What I urge is not the voice of a few dubious passages, nicely culled from the book of God, or forcibly wrested by the interpretation of man. The whole tenor of inspiration runs, with the greatest perspicuity and the greatest uniformity, in this delightful strain. Let me, out of a multitude, produce another express from the court of heaven. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even he that hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. Wine and milk undoubtedly signify the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons; the communications of sanctifying grace, and the hope of eternal glory. These are nourishing and refreshing to the soul, as milk, the richest of foods, and as wine, the best of cordials, are to the body. These you see are to be obtained "without money, and without price,"—without any merit of our own, without any plea deduced from ourselves—by poor, undone, perishing bankrupts. They are to be enjoyed by every one who unfeignedly esteems them, and humbly seeks them. No exception is made; no exclusive clause added. It is not said, any one that is worthy, but

"every one that thirsteth." To leave no room for any misgiving apprehensions, the kind invitation is repeated: "Buy and eat; buy wine and milk." The invaluable yet free tender is confirmed again and again: "He that hath no money—without money—without price." And both are pressed upon us with a very remarkable, with the most affectionate vehemence: "Come ye; come ye; yea come."

Had our heavenly benefactor permitted us to draw up this instrument of conveyance, and word it according to our own wish, what language could we have contrived, to render either the grant more free, or our claim more secure?

Ther. These are cheering truths. They amount to little less than a demonstration. And I am ready to declare, in the language of Agrippa, Almost thou persuadest me to commence a believer.

Asp. And why, my dear friend, why not altogether? Can you distrust the sincerity of the divine overtures? If the overtures are real, your title is unquestionable. Nay, there is more than an overture: You have an actual gift from the almighty Majesty. "To us," says the prophet, including all that wait for the redemption of Christ, and the consolation of Israel, "a child is born," Isa. ix. 6. "To us," he repeats the precious truth, to declare his exuberant joy, and denote the absolute certainty of the thing, see Gen. xli. 32. "a son is given;" even God's own Son, the ever-blessed Jesus, to be our propitiation, our surety, our complete redeemer.

Just cast a look upon yonder neat lodge. Though placed in the centre of a spacious field, it seems to be contiguous with the extremity of the vista. The eye, travelling over such a length of ground, has almost lost the windows, and the decent ornaments of the front. But I shall not soon lose the idea of that amiable munificence, which, as I was rambling one pleasant morning, and accidentally called at the house, I learned from its present owner. He was, I find, one *of your* servants; had spent several years in your

family: When he settled in the world, you bestowed upon him that commodious box, and a pretty adjacent farm; to possess, without molestation or control, during his life. Does he not reckon the little estate, by virtue of your donation, to be his own? as much his own, for the time prescribed, as if he had paid an equivalent in money? Since the Lord Jehovah has given us his Son, and all his unutterable merits; why should we not, with an assurance of faith, receive the incomparable gift? Why should we not confide in it, as firmer than the firmest deed; and far more inviolable than any royal patent? Especially since it has been sealed to us in every sacramental ordinance, and witnessed by every good motion of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Ther. My servant never affronted my authority. If he had vilified my character, or insulted my person, should I then have been inclined to make the same advantageous settlement?

Asp. Herein appears the infinite superiority of the divine bounty. God is rich in mercy, not only to the obedient and grateful, but to the unthankful and unworthy. "To the Lord our God," says the prophet, "belong mercies and forgivenesses;" in measure superabundant, and in continuance unwearied: and this, "notwithstanding we have" offended him by our manifold failures in duty; nay, have "rebelled against him" (Dan. ix. 9.) by flagrant violations of his law.

In sweet concert with this prophetical lesson, sings the transported Psalmist: "Thou, Lord," in thy sacred humanity, "hast ascended up on high;" ascended, from the low caverns of the tomb, to the highest throne in the highest heavens. "Thou hast led captivity captive;" hast abolished death, that universal tyrant; and subdued those powers of darkness which had enslaved the whole world. Like a glorious and triumphant conqueror, thou hast also "received gifts;" not merely for thy own fruition, but to confer on others, by way of honorary and enriching *largess*. What are those gifts, Theron?

Ther. The gifts of the gospel, I suppose; pardon of sin, the influences of the Holy Spirit, and those other privileges of Christianity, which constitute the present happiness of mankind, and prepare them for future bliss.

Asp. You rightly judge. And for whom were those royal, those heavenly donatives received? If you have an inclination to bestow a sword set with diamonds, a finely wrought piece of plate, or an exquisitely finished picture—what names present themselves to your thoughts? what persons are the objects of your choice? The approved friend, or distinguished favourite, I make no question. But for whom (let me ask again, since it is a point of the last importance) were those heavenly donatives received?

Ther. Let me recollect:—"Thou receivedst gifts," not for fallen angels, but "for men;" and not for thy friends, but for thy "enemies;" yea, "for the rebellious also," Psal. lxviii. 18. Merciful heaven! What a word is this! And does it come from the God of truth? Gifts! divine gifts! gifts of unspeakable value and eternal duration! and these to be conferred on enemies, on the rebellious! wretches who are destitute of all gracious qualifications; who deserve not the least favour; but have reason to expect the frowns of indignation, and the sword of vengeance!

Asp. Thus it is written in those sacred constitutions, which are far more steadfast and unalterable than the laws of the Medes and Persians. Thus it is spoken, by the mouth of that almighty Being, with whom there is no variableness, nor the least shadow of turning. Let us not, my dear friend, by unreasonable unbelief, frustrate all these promises, and reject our own mercies. Let us not, by an evil heart of unbelief, make God a liar; and make ourselves, of all creatures, most miserable.

But see! The clouds, which hung their agreeable sables to damp the ardour, and abate the glare of *day,* are departing. The sun has been colouring their

fleecy skirts, and spreading over the floating screen a variety of interchangeable hues. Now he begins to edge them with gold, and shine them into silver; a sure indication, that (like the glittering, but transitory toys, which they represent) they will soon be swept from the horizon, and seen no more. The bright orb, while we are speaking, bursts the veil, and, from a voluminous pomp of parting clouds, pours a flood of splendour over all the face of nature. We shall quickly perceive this open situation too hot to consist with pleasure, and must be obliged to seek for shelter in the shady apartments of the house.

Will you admit me, Theron, into those shady apartments?

Ther. Admit you, Aspasio! I am surprised at your question. I thought you had known me better; and I am sorry it should be needful to assure you, that my house is as much your own as it is mine. The more freely you command it, the more highly you will oblige me.

Asp. May I believe you, Theron? Do you speak from your heart? or must I conclude, that you plausibly profess what you have no intention to perform? Would you be pleased, if I should obstinately persist in these dishonourable suspicions, notwithstanding all your friendly protestations?

Ther. My dear Aspasio, I see your design. I see, and am ashamed; ashamed to think that I should fancy myself more punctual in my professions than God is true to his word. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

DIALOGUE XVI.

Our friends had agreed upon a visit to Philenor. They rode through a fine open fruitful country; which was covered with crops of ripened corn, and occupied by several parties of rustics gathering in the *copious harvest.*

The rye, white and hoary as it were with age, waved its bearded billows, and gave a dry husky rustle before the breeze. The wheat, laden with plenty, and beautifully brown, hung the heavy head, and invited, by its bending posture, the reaper's hand. Plats of barley, and acres of oats, stood whitening in the sun. Upright, and perfectly even, as though the gardener's shears had clipped them at the top, they gratified the spectator's eye, and gladdened the farmer's heart. Beans, partly clad in native green, partly transformed and tawny with the parching ray, were preparing the last employ for the crooked weapon. Some of the grain lay flat, in regular rows, on the new made stubble. Some was erected in graceful shocks along the bristly ridges. Some, conveyed homewards on the loaded waggon, nodded over the groaning axle.

The villages seemed to be empty, and all their inhabitants poured into the plains. Here were persons of each sex, and of every age. The lusty youths, stooping to their work, plied the sickle, or swept with their scythes the falling ranks. The sprightly females followed, binding the handfuls into sheaves, or piling the swaths into hasty cocks. Dispersed up and down were the children of the needy, gleaning the scattered ears, and picking their scanty harvest. Nor were the old people absent; but crawling into the sun, or sitting on a shady eminence, they beheld the toils, the pleasing toils, they once sustained.

This is the most joyful period of the countryman's life; the long expected crown of all his labours. For this he broke the stubborn glebe, and manured the impoverished soil: For this he bore the sultry beams of summer, and shrunk not from the pinching blasts of winter: For this he toiled away the year, in a round of ceaseless but willing activity; knowing that* "the husbandman must labour, before he partakes of the fruits," 2 Tim. ii. 6. And will not the blessed hope of everlasting life, will not the bright expectation of

* Beza thinks, that in settling the construction of this verse, the adverb πρωτον should be connected with the participle κοπιωντα.

consummate bliss, animate us with an equally cheerful resolution, both to resist the temptations, and discharge the duties of our present state?

Short seemed the way, and quick passed the time, as they travelled through such scenes of rural abundance and rural delight. Before they were aware, the horses stopt at Philenor's seat; where they found, to their no small disappointment, that the master was gone abroad. They alighted, however, and took a walk in the gardens.

The gardens, at proper intervals, and in well-chosen situations, were interspersed with pieces of statuary. At the turn of a corner, you are—not shocked with a naked gladiator, or a beastly Priapus,—but agreeably surprised with the image of Tully. He is just risen from his seat, and upon the point of addressing himself to some important oration. A reverential awe appears in his countenance; such as silently acknowledges that he is going to plead before the rulers of the world. Sedate, at the same time, and collected in himself, he seems conscious of superior eloquence, and imboldened by the justice of his cause. His thoughtful aspect, and gracefully expanded arm, speak to the eye before the tongue has uttered a syllable.

You enter an alley, lined on either side with a verdant fan; and having no variety of objects to diversify the intermediate space, your view is conducted to a magnificent building at the end. As you walk along, contemplating the masterly performance in architecture, an unexpected opening diverts your attention, and presents you with some striking imitation of virtuous or heroic life. Not the Macedonian madman, nor Sweden's royal knight-errant, nor Cæsar, infamously renowned for his slaughtered millions—but the truly gallant Czar: a drawn sword in his hand, and a commanding majestic sternness on his brow. The weapon is held in the most menacing posture; and many a spectator has been observed to start back, with apprehensions of fear. It is that

gloriously severe attitude, in which the grateful citizens of Narva beheld him, and in which all posterity will admire him, when he turned upon his victorious but ungovernable troops, and threatened to drench the dagger in their hearts, if they did not immediately desist from rapine* and slaughter; immediately allow quarter to their vanquished foes.

Under a circular dome, supported by pillars of the Doric order, and in a spot where several walks centre, stands—not the Venus de Medicis, corrupting while it captivates the world—but a Spartan mother. Her habit decent and graceful; somewhat like the Juno Matrona of the Romans, as she is finely depictured in Mr Spence's *Polymetis*. Her air stately and resolved; expressive of dignity, yet mingled with softness. She holds a shield; is in the act of delivering it to her son, a youth setting out for the army, and going to hazard his life in the defence of his country. She is supposed to add that spirited and magnanimous exhortation, which is engraven on the protuberance of the buckler,—η ταν, η επι ταις—"Bring it back my son, as thy trophy; or be brought back upon it, as thy bier."

I am particularly pleased, said Theron, with the contrivance of this last ornament. It is regulated by one of the most refined rules of art, Not to lavish away all the beauty at a single view, but to make a skilful reserve for some future occasion. The dome and the columns afford pleasure, when beheld at a considerable distance; the fine animated figure in the midst displays its graces on a nearer approach: by which means the attention is kept awake, and the entertainment continues new.

But what I principally admire, is the spirit or style of the decorations in general. They put me in mind of a very just remark, which Mr Pope has

* "As soon as the soldiers were masters of the town, (Narva), they fell to plunder, and gave themselves up to the most enormous barbarities. The Czar ran from place to place, to put a stop to the disorder and massacre. He was even obliged to kill with his own hand several Muscovites, who did not hearken to his orders."—VOLTAIRE'S *Hist. Charles XII.*

somewhere made. It is, if I remember right, to this effect:—" A man not only shews his taste, but his virtue, in the choice of his ornaments. A proper piece of history, represented in painting on a rich man's walls, (or exhibited in imagery amidst his gardens), is very often a better lesson than any he could teach by his conversation. In this sense, the stones may be said to speak, when men cannot, or will not." All but the comparative or satirical part of the observation, I would apply to the prospect before us, and its worthy owner.

Asp. Philenor's gardens are, I think, more chaste and delicate in their ornaments than a certain collegiate church. In the latter place, we might reasonably expect the strictest adherence to purity, if we should not meet with the symbols of piety and incitements to religion. What then would be the reflections of a judicious observer, if, in such a solemn and venerable edifice, he should see a huge brawny fellow stuck up against the wall, with his posteriors half bare, his whole body more than half naked, and in an attitude none of the most decent?* Excuse me, Theron. I confess myself ashamed even to rehearse the description. How then can the spectacle itself become the house of divine worship?

Ther. But perhaps this same brawny fellow may represent a Heathen demigod; one of the idols worshipped by antiquity; the tutelary deity of valour.

Asp. And will this justify the practice? Does not this add profaneness to immodesty? Are we Christians to thank Hercules for the valour of our warriors, and make our acknowledgments to Pallas for the conduct of our generals? Shall we Christians behold with admiration, or recognize as our benefactors, what the apostle has stigmatized under the character of " devils?" 1 Cor. x. 20.

* Referring to the monument lately erected for Major-General Fleming, in Westminster-Abbey; where, under the General's bust, are placed Hercules and Pallas. Hercules with his club and lion's skin, in the manner related above; Pallas, with a mirror and serpent at her side. The reader may see a picture and an explanation of this *monument in the Gentleman's* Magazine for August 1754.

If he who overthrew the tables of the money-changers, had taken a walk in these famous cloisters, I am apt to suspect he would have paid no very agreeable compliment to this fine piece of statuary. "Take these things hence," would probably have been his command; and, "make not the precincts of your temple a chamber of Pagan imagery," his rebuke, John ii. 16. Neither is it at all unlikely, that the image itself, notwithstanding its inimitable workmanship, might have shared the fate of its kinsman Dagon,

> ——When the captive ark
> Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopp'd off
> In his own temple, on the groundsell edge
> When he fell flat, and shamed his worshippers. MILTON, i. 458.

Ther. But how should the artist represent the great achievements and the shining qualities of his hero, if you will not allow him to make use of these significant emblems?

Asp. I question whether they are so very significant. The mirror seems to characterize a fop, rather than a soldier. It leads us to think of a soft Narcissus admiring himself, rather than a sagacious general planning the operations of the campaign. Besides, is sacred literature so destitute of proper emblems, that we must borrow the decorations of our churches, and the trophies of our conquerors, from the dreams of superstition or the delusions of idolatry? How just and expressive are those emblematical representations exhibited in Ezekiel's vision; where activity and speed are signified by hands in conjunction with wings; and the deep, the complicated, yet ever harmonious schemes of Providence, by "a wheel in the middle of a wheel?" With what propriety and force are the noblest endowments pictured in the revelations of St John, and their grand machinery! Superior wisdom and benevolence of heart, are described by the face of a man; strength of mind and intrepidity of spirit, by the visage of a lion; *calm*ness of temper and indefatigable application, by

the features of an ox; a penetrating discernment and an expeditious habit of acting, by the form of a flying eagle, Rev. iv. 7.

These hieroglyphics are graceful, are pertinent, and such as every spectator will understand. Whereas the devices of our new monumental encomium are, I presume, to the unlearned, hardly intelligible; to the serious, little better than profane; and to every beholder, indelicate, if not immodest.—Philenor, I imagine, would blush to admit them into his walks or avenues. And I am sorry to find them received into the most ancient,* most renowned, and most frequented church in the kingdom.

Talking in this manner, they come to a curious grove, formed on that uncommon plan proposed by Mr Addison in one of his Spectators. It consisted wholly of evergreens. Firs, clad in verdant silver, pointed their resinous leaves, and shot aloft their towering cones. Laurels, arrayed in glossy green, spread their ample foliage, and threw abroad their rambling boughs. Bay-trees were expanded into a fan, that no weather could tarnish; or rounded into a column, that knew not how to moulder. While the laurustinus ran out into a beautiful irregularity of shape, and compacted her reddening gems, in order to unfold her whitening bloom. In one place lay a dale, gently sinking, and coated with the chamomile's natural frieze; which never changes its colour, never loses its gloss. Near it, and scooped, you would imagine, from the same hollow, arose a mount, softly swelling, and shagged with furze; gay with perennial verdure, and generally decked with golden blossoms. Here you are led through a serpentine walk, and hedges of box; and find, perhaps, a solitary pyramid

* Some antiquarians trace back the origin of this church even to the reign of Lucius; which is more than the space of 1500 years. Others suppose, that Sebert, King of the East-Saxons, about the year of our Lord 605, built the first religious structure on this spot. All agree, that it was re-edified and enlarged by Edward the Confessor; and that the present stately and magnificent fabric was founded by Henry III.

or a capacious urn, each composed of unfading yew. There you look through a strait alley, fenced on either side, and arched over head, with mantling philyra; and see, at the extremity, an obelisk sheathed in ivy, and ornamented with its sable clusters as with wreaths of living sculpture. Scattered up and down were several sorts of holly; some striped with white, some spotted with yellow, some preparing to brighten and beautify the scene with berries of glowing scarlet.

The heads of the trees, arising one above another in a gradual slope, from the diminutive mezereon to the lofty cypress; the several shadings of their green attire, greatly diversified and judiciously intermixed, afford, especially in the winter season, a most enlivened and lovely prospect. As the sunshine is, by the frequenters of this grove, usually more coveted than the shade, it is so disposed as to admit, in one part or another, every gleam of fine weather which exhilarates the winter.

Asp. There must be something unspeakably pleasing in a plantation, which appears lively and fruitful when all its neighbours of the woodland race are barren, bleak, or dead: But how much more cheering and delightful must it be, when decrepit age or bodily infirmities have impaired the vigour and laid waste the gratifications of our youthful prime, to find a solid undecaying pleasure in the favour of God and the hope of glory! Now, indeed, the feathered tribes resort to the more flowing umbrage of the poplar and the ash; but, amidst December's cold, you shall observe them forsaking the leafless woods, and flocking to this friendly receptacle; hopping across the sunny walks, or sheltering themselves, in the wet and stormy day, under these trusty boughs. So the many thoughtless creatures, who turn their back upon religion amidst the soft and soothing caresses of prosperity, will want, extremely want, its sovereign supports under the sharp and distressing assaults of adversity, sickness, and death. This collection, it is true, may not equal the groves of annual verdure in floridity of

dress; but it far exceeds them in the duration of its ornaments. Ere long, yonder showy branches will be stript of their holiday clothes; whereas these will retain their honours, when those are all rags or nakedness. Thus will it be with every refuge for our poor, imperfect, sinful souls; excepting only the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every thing else will "fade as a leaf," Isa. lxiv. 6. This, my Theron, and this alone, is an evergreen; always free for our acceptance, and always effectual to save.

Ther. An evergreen it is. But, like the ruddy and inviting fruits which hang on the uppermost boughs of those lofty trees in the orchard, it seems to be quite out of my reach.

Asp. Are you sensible that you need the immaculate and perfect righteousness of our Saviour?

Ther. Was Jonah sensible how much he needed the cooling shelter of his gourd, when the sun smote fiercely upon his temples, and all the fervours of the fiery east were glowing around him? So is your Theron sensible, that without a far better righteousness than his own, he must inevitably be condemned by the sentence of the law, and cannot possibly stand before the high and holy God.

Asp. Remember then what our Lord says to such persons: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28. How gracious is the invitation! Come unto me, the Father of compassions, and the Giver of every good gift. How extensive as well as gracious! All that are "weary," (Κοπιωντες), toiling in a fruitless pursuit of happiness, and spending your labour for that which satisfieth not. All that are "heavy laden," (Πεφορτισμενοι), oppressed with the servitude of sin, or bowed down under a load of misery. These, all these are called; and you, my friend, in the number. They have not a ticket, a bond, or some inferior pledge, to ascertain their success; but they have a promise from faithfulness and truth itself. "I will give you rest," says the Strength of Israel; whose

will is fate, and his word the basis of the universe. And if Christ will give you rest, he will wash you in that blood which atones, and invest you with that righteousness which justifies; since nothing short of these mercies can afford any satisfaction to the guilty conscience, or true satisfaction to the restless soul. —Permit me to ask further, Do you earnestly desire this righteousness?

Ther. Will yonder hirelings, when fatigued with the heat and burden of a long, laborious, sultry day, desire the shades of the evening, and the repose of the night? I can truly, on this occasion, adopt the words of the prophet: "The desire of my soul is to thy name," blessed Jesus, "and to the remembrance" of thy righteousness. The very mention of this spotless righteousness is music to my ears. Every fresh, though distant discovery of it, gleams pleasure upon my mind. And that would be a welcome day, a day greatly to be distinguished, which should bring it near to my view, and home to my soul.

Asp. Say not then, my dear friend, that Christ, and the blessings of his purchase, are beyond your reach. They are now, even now at your door. You need not argue anxiously and despondingly, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from beneath?" Rom. x. 6, 7. There is no such impossibility, no such difficulty in the thing. Christ and his righteousness, Christ and his salvation, are brought nigh in the word of promise. And "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," as dying on the cross for thy redemption; "if thou shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead" for thy justification, "thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. 9. In so doing, thou shalt receive remission of sin, and power to withstand its temptations.

Have you never, in your travels, been overtaken by the dark and tempestuous night? When, chilled with the cold, and almost drowned in the rain, you *arrived* at the house of some valued friend, was you *not willing* to gain admittance?

Ther. Willing! I was desirous, I was almost impatient; I thought every moment an hour till the hospitable door opened—till I exchanged the dismal gloom and the driving storm, for the cheerful light and the amiable company within.

Asp. The adored Emmanuel professes himself equally willing to come unto you. "Behold!" says the Saviour of the world, "I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. Like one exposed to all the inclemencies of the air, whose "head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night," Cant. v. 2. he is not only willing, but desirous to enter. "He stands at the door," with great long-suffering and perseverance, till all obstacles are removed, or rather till that one grand obstacle is taken out of the way, unbelief. "He knocks," by the preaching of his word, and the promise of his gospel, like one who solicits admission, and will take no denial. Hear then his soliciting voice, and "he will sup with you;" will make his abode with you, will manifest his glories in you, and communicate his grace to you. Believe his promising word, and "you shall sup with him:" this will be refreshing to your distressed soul, as the most sumptuous banquet to the famished stomach and craving appetite.

Ther. I cannot open my heart.

Asp. Christ has the key of David. "He openeth, and none can shut; he shutteth and none can open," Rev. iii. 7. He is able to make all grace, not only to exist in you, but abound towards you, 2 Cor. ix. 8.; and what is still more encouraging, he is professedly "the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2. Since he has claimed this character to himself, since he has undertaken to execute this office, why should we harbour the least distrust? Will he not fulfil his own office, and act agreeably to his own character? Be not, my dear Theron, be not faithless, but believing.

Ther. This I believe—That I am a lost sinner; under the curse of the law, and liable to the wrath of God; that there is no relief for my distress but in Christ and his transcendent merits. He, and he alone, is able to save me from my guilt, and all its dismal train of miseries. He is a Saviour fully proportioned to my wants; exactly suited to my several necessities. I believe, and am persuaded, that if I was interested in the divine Jesus, my soul should live.

Asp. Be persuaded likewise, that there is no clogging qualification, no worth to be possessed, no duty to be performed, in order to your full participation of Christ and his riches. Only believe, and they are all your own. "Christ dwelleth in our hearts,"—how? by legal works, and laborious prerequisites? No; but "by faith," Eph. iii. 17. "He that believeth on the Son, hath"—a chimerical? far from it—a real and a substantial happiness, even "everlasting life," John iii. 36.

Ther. Ah! my Aspasio! I cannot believe. I feel my impotency. My mind is, as you formerly hinted, like the withered arm.

Asp. It is no small advantage, Theron, to be convinced of our inability in this respect. This is, if not the beginning of faith, the sign of its approach; and shews it to be, if not in the soul, yet at the very door. Fear not, my friend. He who bids you stretch out, will strengthen the withered arm. He first makes us sensible of our weakness, and then "fulfils all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power," 2 Thess. i. 11.

Can you doubt of his willingness? Then go to Mount Calvary. There listen to the "sounding of his bowels and of his mercies towards you," Isa. lxiii. 15. Has not every drop of blood a tongue? Cannot you read a language in each streaming wound, and hear a voice in every dying pang? Do they not all speak his infinite love even to wretched sinners? Do they not all address you with that tender remonstrance, "*O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?*" *Matth. xiv. 31.* Nay, do they not all declare, with

an energy superior to the force of words, that he will deny you no manner of thing that is good?

Who gave his blood, what gift will he withhold?

Ther. I am ashamed to recollect, what mistaken notions I once entertained concerning the easiness of believing; as though it were to be performed, like the act of rising from our seat, or stepping into a coach, by our own strength, and at our own time. What a stranger was I then to the blindness of my understanding, and the hardness of my heart; to my bondage under unbelief, and averseness to the way of salvation "by grace through faith!"

Asp. Since you are sensible of your impotence, beware of the contrary extreme. Because you cannot by your own strength exercise faith, let not this occasion a tame resignation of yourself to infidelity. You must endeavour, diligently endeavour, to believe; and wait, and pray, for the divine Spirit. Though it is his office to testify of Christ, "and bring near the Redeemer's righteousness," Isa. xlvi. 1.; yet his influences are not to supersede, but to encourage our own efforts. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" here is our duty. "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do," Phil. ii. 12, 13; here is our encouragement: and O what a glorious encouragement, to have the arm of Omnipotence stretched out for our support and our succour!

Ther. How, or in what manner, does the divine Spirit work faith in the heart of a sinner? You wonder, perhaps, that I ask such a question. But my apprehensions are strangely dull, and my views very dim, with regard to spiritual things. If in this respect I have any sight, it is like his who "saw men as trees walking;" saw these several objects, but so obscurely, so confusedly, that he could not distinguish one from the other, only by the circumstance of motion.

Asp. The most enlightened minds see only in part; and all have reason to make the blind beggar's supplication their own request: "Lord, that I may re-

ceive my sight!" The operation of the Holy Spirit in producing faith, is thus described by a master in Israel: "The divine Spirit brings Christ and his righteousness nigh unto us in the promise of the gospel; clearing at the same time our right and warrant to intermeddle with all, without fear of vitious intromission; encouraging and enabling to a measure of confident application, and taking home all to ourselves, freely, without money, and without price."

You was once, Theron, a zealous advocate for good works. Now you seem to have abandoned your clients. Remember, my dear friend, what our Lord Jesus Christ says, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God," of all works most acceptable and most honourable to the divine Majesty, "that you believe on him whom he hath sent."

Ther. The true belief, according to your notion, Aspasio, is so refined and exalted a virtue, that I very much question whether I shall ever be able to attain it.

Asp. If you are unable to attain it, is the Lord unable to give it? Our sufficiency for this and every good work, is not in ourselves, but in God. And to him difficulties are easy: Before him mountains are a plain. You will please to remember, that sinners are said to believe, not through their own ability, but through the power of grace: and you will permit me to ask, how you became acquainted with my notion of faith?

Ther. I am not so inattentive a reader of your letters, as to forget your definition of this momentous article. Faith, you say, "is a real persuasion that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead; that through this great atonement and glorious obedience he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings."*

* See Letter X. Here is, it must be acknowledged, a total omission *of* all preparatory or rather impulsive dispositions; such as convictions *of sin, and hungering* after salvation. Here is likewise a total silence

Asp. I am obliged to you, Theron, for the honour you do my letter; and I hope you will pay an equal regard to the determination of our church. You once apprehended that my attachment to the church of England was unsettled and wavering. Judge now who has most thoroughly imbibed her doctrines, and is most invariably tenacious of her true interests. In the first part of the Homily concerning the sacrament, we have this definition of faith: "It is a belief, not only that the death of Christ is available for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God, but also that he made a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing for thy sins."†

My notion of faith, you see, is evidently the voice of the establishment; and I think it gives us a clear intelligible sense, suited to the most common acceptation of the word; such as would naturally arise in the mind of a stranger, who, without any bias on his judgment, should inquire into the purport of our religion, or consider the language of our Bible.

Ther. How suited to the most common acceptation of the word?

Asp. When you sent a message to your tenant, who, in his last sickness, expressed so much uneasiness on account of his numerous family and embarrassed circumstances, assuring him that you had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; when you told the poor woman whose husband fell from the loaded waggon, and broke both his legs, that you would order a surgeon to attend him, and would continue his weekly pay; how did they regard, how receive

concerning all causes, instrumental or efficient, such as the power of the divine Word, and the agency of the divine Spirit. No mention is made of the fruits or concomitants; such as love to Christ, love of the brethren, or purity of heart. Nothing is exhibited to view but the form and essence of faith, or that particular act which characterizes and constitutes real faith, which distinguishes it from the hypocritical pretension and the historical notion. This simple view is given, that the mind may fix upon the grand point, and not be embarrassed with a multiplicity of ideas.

† Answerable to this was the doctrine of the primitive church; Η πιστις δικαιοσυνη του Θεου. CHRYSOST.

your promised kindness?—So let us credit the gracious declarations of our God, so accept his faithful promise, and then we shall answer the import of the word—then we shall truly believe.

Ther. Where is there in Scripture any thing parallel or similar to these instances?

Asp. Have you never read the words of Micah: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression?" Mic. vii. 18. Here is the gracious declaration.—"He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities," Mic. vii. 19. Here is the faithful promise.—And why, my friend, why should we pay less credit to the ever-living Jehovah, than to a man whose breath is in his nostrils?" Is there treachery with the Holy One of Israel? Does the Lord make, and then violate his promise? "Ask now of the days that are past, ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether such a thing hath ever been?"

Ther. God has never violated his promise, when it was expressly made, and particularly applied. But in this circumstance there is a wide difference between the case of your friend, and the case of his poor people. I named the object of my compassion in one of the instances, and made a personal application in the other: Neither of which is done in the Scriptures.

Asp. Though we are not particularly named, yet we are very exactly described, by our family, our inclination, our practice. What says eternal Wisdom, when she makes a tender of her inestimable blessings? "To you, O men," not to fallen angels, "I call; and my voice is" not to this man or that man exclusively, but "to the sons of men" indefinitely, Prov. viii. 4. What says the holy apostle, when he publishes the counsels of heaven? "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save"—the upright? the unblamable? Was this the case, our hopes would be covered with a cloud, or rather totally and

finally eclipsed. But see! they are clear as the light, and conspicuous as the noon-day. For he came, (cheering, charming word!) he came to save "sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15.

Consonant to all which is the declaration of another sacred envoy: "He," the Prince of peace, the Monarch of the universe, "suffered"—for whom? They in whose behalf this matchless ransom was paid, must have an undeniable right to look upon redemption as their own: And blessed, for ever blessed be God, it is most peremptorily said, he suffered—"for the unjust," 1 Pet. iii. 18.

That no part of our character might be omitted, and no part of our misery pass unrelieved, it is farther declared, "When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. When we were ungodly, and considered only as ungodly creatures; neither possessed of any thing amiable, nor having the least ability to acquire it; nay, when we were chargeable with horrid guilt, and incapable of expiating a single offence; then, even then, Christ died—and for such abominable wretches he died. Are we not of the human family? Are we not unjust towards our fellow-creatures, and ungodly towards our great Creator? Are we not in all relations, and in every respect, sinners? If we are, (and upon these questions incredulity itself will scarcely demur), let us not frowardly reject, rather let us thankfully receive those spiritual treasures, which, by virtue of the afore-cited conveyance, belong to such people; which, by several other clauses in the will and testament of our crucified Lord, evidently devolve to such persons.

Ther. Is it possible, Aspasio? Can we be warranted and encouraged to receive these treasures, in a capacity, and under a denomination which I should think more likely to exclude us, disinherit us, and overthrow all our pretensions?

Asp. This may seem strange, but it is true. All the blessings of the gospel proceed upon a supposition of sinfulness. Christ is made wisdom unto his people;

but what occasion for the accession of wisdom, unless it be in the case of ignorance and folly? Christ is made righteousness; but who can stand in need of a justifying righteousness, if they are not in themselves unprofitable and guilty? Christ is made sanctification; and does not this imply a state of corruption to be remedied, a body of sin to be destroyed? Christ is made redemption; and from what are persons redeemed but from chains and bondage, from misery and ruin, from all manner of evil?

It is also a most precious and invaluable truth; such as I would hold fast, and never, never let go. When I search for my own endowments, I find nothing that I dare venture to plead, being in my best moments, and amidst my choicest duties, a sinner. As this is, at all times, my undoubted character, I have at all times an undoubted warrant to say, The uncreated Wisdom calleth me; the blessed Jesus came to save me; the great Messiah suffered death for me.

Let me illustrate the point. Romulus, you know, the founder of the Roman empire, was a poor prince, had but a handful of subjects, and very scanty territories. What expedient could he devise to enlarge the boundaries of the one, and augment the number of the other? He issued a proclamation, addressed to outlaws and criminals, all that were involved in debt or obnoxious to punishment, promising that as many as would settle under his dominion, should be secured from prosecution, and vested with considerable privileges.—We will suppose a person in those distressed circumstances. Upon hearing the welcome invitation he hangs down his head, and, with a dejected air cries, "I am a debtor, I am a criminal, and therefore unworthy of the royal protection." What answer should be made to such a dispirited complainer? Make the same to yourself, whenever you are inclined to renew the present objections: Remembering, that the infinite and eternal Sovereign, to display the *magnificence* of his majesty, and manifest the riches

of his goodness, has commissioned his ambassadors to publish in every nation under heaven, "That all unhappy sinners, who are oppressed by the devil, and liable to damnation, may come to Christ, and rely on Christ; may in this manner obtain pardon, righteousness, and all the privileges of children."

Ther. At this rate the vilest miscreants have as clear, nay, have the very same warrant to believe in Christ, and receive his salvation, as the highest saints.

Asp. The very same. In this respect there is no difference. All have sinned, and must sue for spiritual blessings, not as deserving, but as guilty creatures; must receive them, not as the recompense of their own worth, but as the issues of infinite mercy. The vilest miscreants are blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts: therefore they see no beauty in a Saviour that they should desire him. Whereas when the divine Spirit opens their eyes, and inclines their hearts, they discover and make use of just the same right to Christ and his merit as the highest saints;—a right founded not on their awakened desires, not on any thing in themselves, but purely, solely, entirely, on the free grant of a Saviour.

Should you ask the highest saints, On what their hopes are grounded? This, or something to this effect, would be their reply:—"On the free exhibition of Christ and his salvation, recorded in the word of truth. There we find it written, 'To you,' though Gentiles and idolaters, 'is preached the remission of sins,' Acts xiii. 38. 'The promise is to you,' even to you, 'whose wicked hands have crucified and slain the Lord of life;' and not to you only, but 'to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God,' by the message of his everlasting gospel, 'shall call,' Acts ii. 39. We remember, Theron, though you seem to have forgotten, the wretched outcast, polluted in its blood, yet accepted by the Holy One of Israel. We remember the heavenly gifts, received by the triumphant Redeemer, for enemies, and for the rebellious. Nor can we easily forget the promise of forgiveness

which was made, and the blessing of forgiveness which was vouchsafed, even to the murderers of the Lord of glory."*

Ther. This is a pleasing supposition. But it would be more satisfactory, if you should produce any of the saints speaking in this manner.

Asp. Isaiah, you will allow, was a saint of no inferior rank. Yet he breathes the spirit I am describing, and acts the part I am vindicating. Turn to that epitome of the gospel, his fifty-third chapter. There you may observe him claiming a share in the greatest of all privileges, salvation through the blood of Christ. How does he advance and maintain his claim? Not in the capacity of a sanctified, but under the character of a sinful person. These are his words: "The Lord hath laid on him," on his Son Jesus Christ, "the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 6. Of me, and of my brethren in piety, does he mean? No; but of me, and of my fellow transgressors. This is evidently implied in the clause I have quoted. In the preceding part of the verse the prophet explains himself, and leaves no room for hesitation. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own ways;" yet our transgressions, our iniquities, the God of all mercy has transferred from us, and charged upon our Redeemer. As the vilest miscreants are indispensably obliged to confess the former, they have a free and full right to profess, to assert, and to believe the latter.

At this you may probably wonder; at this we ought all to wonder. This is that amazingly rich grace, which will be the wonder of saints and angels through a boundless eternity. Yet, though we wonder, let us not murmur. Let not the elder brother repine, because the young prodigal enters at the same door, and is admitted to the same table with himself.

To this testimony of the saints, shall I add the decision of their King? "God so loved the world," even the fallen, the wicked, the apostate world, that

* Referring to Dialogue XV.

in the fulness of time "he gave his only-begotten Son," John iii. 16. to bring in a perfect righteousness, and obtain eternal redemption. And he still gives him, with all his saving benefits, in the promise of the gospel.

Ther. Does this general gift warrant a sinner to make a particular application of all to himself?

Asp. It warrants, it demands, and in other instances obtains, a particular application. When Jonah, in pursuance of the divine command, "cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" there was no particular mention of man, woman, or child. Neither the king, nor the nobles, nor the commons were specified; much less was each and every inhabitant threatened by name. Nevertheless, this general denunciation alarmed them all; was influential on them all. Insomuch that "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least," Jonah iii. 5. "They believed;" hence we learn the true nature of believing: "God speaks to me, and what he speaks he will perform;" is its genuine profession. Hence we likewise discover, who they are which ought in this manner to apply the general word: "All, from the least even unto the greatest, believed."

Ther. The case is not parallel, Aspasio. This was a denunciation of vengeance, not a promise of grace.

Asp. And can you suppose, that God is more liberal of vengeance than he is communicative of grace? Vengeance is his strange work, but in mercy and loving kindness he delighteth. Are we bound to believe and apply his dreadful threatenings? not allowed to believe and apply his precious promises? Surely, the Lord's ways are not so unequal. When the law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things," Gal. iii. 10. should not every hearer take this to himself, and submit to the sentence of just condemnation? When the gospel says, "He came to save that which was lost," Matth. xviii. 11. should

not every hearer take this also to himself, and embrace the tender of free salvation?

However, if you dislike my instance, I will give you another; which is not of the vindictive, but of the beneficent kind. When the manna made its first appearance in the wilderness; when the Israelites knew neither what it was, nor for whom intended; both these particulars were explained by Moses: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat," Exod. xvi. 15. No mention is made of any individual person. Yet the whole congregation looked upon this as an undoubted permission, both for themselves and their children, to gather, to fetch home, and to use the miraculous food. And here, Theron, here lies the principal difference between the vile miscreant and the exalted saint: Not that the one was originally better than the other; not that the one has a clearer grant of Christ than the other; but the latter has gathered the heavenly manna, and uses it to his unspeakable advantage: whereas it lies round about the tents of the former; and whoever will, may take, may eat, and his soul shall live.

Ther. God gave the manna to all the Israelites, both good and bad. But does he give Christ with this unlimited freeness?

Asp. Our Lord himself, alluding to this very miracle, vouchsafes you an answer: "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven," John vi. 32. My Father giveth you his incarnate Son, and his divinely excellent righteousness. These are bread indeed; bread which came down from the regions of heaven; and bread which nourisheth the soul for the joys of heaven. This my Father giveth you; though not in actual possession, yet in right to possess. This he giveth you, in the free indefinite grant of his word; without which grant, any attempt to possess, even in the most upright of men, would be illegal and presumptuous; by virtue of which grant, even the poor sinner has an unquestionable warrant to receive and possess the riches of Christ.

Ther. Unquestionable! is not this expression too peremptory? That such a grant should be made to believers, I can easily conceive: But is it made to sinners—to any sinners—to the most abandoned sinners?

Asp. Yes, Theron, to sinners. And when sinners receive the grant, then they commence believers. Was it made to believers only, no man living would inherit the blessing; because all men are, by the depravity and impotence of their nature, originally concluded under sin and unbelief.

What said our Lord? "My Father giveth you;" that is, the people who stood around, and heard his gracious voice; many of whom were in a carnal state habitually, and even then were in a murmuring, wicked frame, John vi. 26. 41. What says his prophet? "To us a Son is given;" not to us who were antecedently children of the light, but who "walk in darkness, and dwell in the shadow of death," Isa. ix. 2. 6. What saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out? "I will give thee," meaning his beloved Son, "for a covenant;" it is not said, of believers, but "of the people;" it is not said, of new creatures, but "of the Gentiles;" who were the vilest of all creatures, or, as you have properly spoke, the most abandoned sinners. That we may understand more clearly the signification of these terms, and see the true extent of this gift, it is added, I will give thee "to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison," Isa. xlii. 6, 7. Miserable and guilty wretches, blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts; these are the patentees in the heavenly grant. To these the great Surety is given, together with all the benefits of his covenant.

Here then the grant and the gift are mentioned; the persons for whom they are designed are specified, and expressly named. They are sinners; blinded and enslaved sinners; or, if there be any other more obnoxious sort, they are all comprehended in this one word, *Gentiles*. Only allow these texts to be

true; only allow the divine speaker to be sincere and faithful; then we may boldly affirm, that any, that every poor sinner is authorized to say, "God gives me his Son, to be my covenant surety. I take him at his word. The Surety and all his merits are mine. Divinely rich bounty! O let us not refuse what, on this consideration, the unerring Spirit calls "our own mercy," Jonah ii. 8. Let us adore the beneficence of our God; let us believe his promising word; and in this sweet, this easy manner, obtain both present and final salvation.

Ther. Let me recollect:—Christ is given for the world, the apostate world, to believe on: Christ has died, not for the righteous, but for the ungodly: Christ came in the flesh to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. Well, Aspasio, if these things are true, (and how can they be otherwise, since they are the express doctrine of Scripture?) it is pity but they were more generally known. For my part, I must confess they are not only new, but strange to me. Though I have read them in the Bible, yet when I come to consider them, and compare them with what passes in my breast, I find they are quite contrary to my usual ways of thinking.

Asp. You remind me of a valuable person, whom I once numbered among my acquaintance, and whose way of thinking was somewhat similar to your own. Will you give me leave to relate his case?

Ther. Most gladly. It will be some kind of consolation to hear that others have laboured under the same difficulties with myself, and been subject to the same distresses. If I am informed of their deliverance from those distresses, it will be like shewing me an opened door for effecting my own escape. If I am likewise acquainted with the manner of their deliverance, this will furnish me with a clue to guide my steps.

Asp. This person was roused from a habit of indolence and supineness, into a serious concern for his *eternal* welfare. Convinced of his depraved nature

and aggravated guilt, he had recourse to the Scriptures, and to frequent prayer. He attended the ordinances of Christianity, and sought earnestly for an assured interest in Christ; but found no steadfast faith, and tasted very little comfort. At length he applied to an eminent divine, and laid open the state of his heart. Short, but weighty, was the answer he received: "I perceive, Sir, the cause of all your distress. You do not, you will not come to Christ as a sinner. This mistake stands between your soul and the joy of religion. This detains you in the gall of bitterness; and take heed, O! take heed, lest it consign you over to the bond of iniquity!" This admonition never departed from the gentleman's mind; and it became a happy means of removing the obstructions to his peace.

Remember this little history, Theron; and may it prove as efficacious for your good, as it is pertinent to your circumstances! Remember, that the free grant of Christ, made in the word of truth, and addressed to sinners of mankind, is the only basis and ground-work of faith. An apostle, after all the labours of his exemplary life, can have no better: and a Magdalene or a Manasseh, as a motive and encouragement for their turning to the Lord, have the very same.

But we digress from the principal subject. Since you disapprove my account of faith, I must desire you to favour me with a description more correct and unexceptionable: For, as you justly observed, this is a very momentous article. Is not Christ the source of all spiritual good, and faith the main channel of conveyance? Surely then it should be made and kept as clear as possible. Is not Christ the foundation of all true godliness, and faith the master-arch in this sacred structure? Surely then it should be raised and turned with the utmost care.

Ther. Palæmon's account is this—Faith, he says, is a firm persuasion, that Jesus Christ has shed his blood, and fulfilled all righteousness; has sustained

the punishment due to sin, and obtained full reconciliation with God: that all this grace, and each of these benefits, are free, perfectly free—for you, for me, for others. In consequence of this persuasion, the sinner flies to Christ, comes to Christ, and trusts in Christ for his own salvation.

Asp. I have the highest regard for Palæmon's judgment; and I cannot but think my opinion is confirmed even by his. The act of flying to Christ is an appropriating act. It implies an intention to get out of danger; it implies a discovery of Christ as the appointed safety; and consists in making use of him as such. How can this be done, but by a persuasion that he is mine? that his sufferings were in my stead, and that his death is my safeguard? What is meant by coming to Christ, we may learn from Jeremiah: "Behold! we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 22. Coming, you see, includes a real persuasion that the Lord is our God. While we are wholly destitute of this persuasion, we stand at a distance, and our souls are afar off. We are never brought nigh; we never come, in the prophet's sense, till we are taught to say, each one for himself, "Thou art the Lord my God." The act of trusting in Christ is much of the same nature: It presupposes that Christ is the trustee of the covenant of grace; it proceeds upon a conviction of his faithfulness in executing the office; and it is a solemn surrender or giving up the whole affair of our salvation into his hand; giving it up, not in uncertainty of success, (this would be mistrusting rather than trusting), but with a certainty in some measure suitable to the fidelity and ability of him with whom we have to do.

If you still are doubtful whether any such persuasion is implied in trusting, let us chuse a referee. Let us carry our controversy to the king of Israel. Inquire of David, why he trusts in the Lord, and what he means by trusting? To both these inquiries he answers distinctly and fully: "The Lord is my high

ower, my shield, and he in whom I trust," Psalm xliv. 2. "He is—he is my shield; of this I am ersuaded, and therefore I trust in him: or, this I elieve, and, in so doing, I trust on him."

Ther. There is an air of assurance in your repreentation of faith, which sounds harsh in my ear, and ppears presumptuous in my eye. It is as if people retended to know their seat in heaven before the udgment-day.

Asp. The Papists, I own, take great offence at this xpression, and utterly explode this doctrine. But hey are no infallible guides for us to follow; neither re they very inviting patterns for us to imitate. You nd I, Theron, cannot be offended at the expression r the doctrine, if we recollect what we have been aught in the first stage of life, and what is professed n the last scene of mortality. We are taught, even from our infancy, that the sacrament of the Lord's upper is not only a sign of spiritual grace, but a pledge to assure us thereof. At the interment of the dead, we profess our sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. That this is always applied, with due propriety, in our burial service, I will not venture to assert; that it sufficiently countenances my sentiments, none will undertake to deny. And if this countenances, the apostle authorizes them, when he addresses us with this very remarkable exhortation: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith;" with a firm persuasion of acceptance; with a certain expectation of success.

However, if you dislike the word *assurance*, we will change it for the more softened, and more modestly sounding term *appropriation*.

Ther. You change it for a more softened, not for a more intelligible term. I must desire to know what you mean by the word appropriation.

Asp. To appropriate, in the theological sense, is to take home the grace of God, which lies in the com-

mon indefinite grant of the gospel. Is Christ the treasure hid in the field? To appropriate this treasure, is to receive and use it as our own portion. Is Christ the balm of Gilead, full of saving health? To appropriate this balm, is to take and apply it for the recovery of our own souls. And without such an appropriation, how can we either be enriched by the former, or healed by the latter?

Let me farther explain my meaning, and exemplify the position, by considering Christ in his several offices. Christ, as a Priest, is made to guilty creatures righteousness. When we appropriate the grace of our great High-priest, this is the language of our hearts, "In the Lord have I righteousness," Isa. xlv. 24. Christ, as a Prophet, is made to ignorant creatures wisdom. When we appropriate the benefits of our unerring Prophet, this is the persuasion of our souls, "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me," Mic. vii. 8. Christ, as a King, is made unto depraved creatures sanctification. When we appropriate the munificence of our almighty King, this is our comfortable trust, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work," 2 Tim. iv. 18. This is what I mean by appropriation. That something of this kind is included in the essence of faith, is the sentiment I would maintain. Which sentiment might be confirmed, if such confirmation were demanded, by a multitude of the most illustrious witnesses: witnesses so illustrious, that they were a blessing to the world, and an honour to human nature; so numerous, that, without giving an abstract of their testimonies, it might seem tedious only to recite their names.*

* If the reader should inquire after their names, he will find some of them enumerated in the following catalogue:—Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Beza, Bullinger, Bucer, Knox, Craig, Melvil, Bruce, Davidson, Forbes, &c. Ursinus, Zanchius, Junius, Piscator, Rollock, Dunæus, Wendelinus, Chamierus, Sharpius, Bodius, Pareus, Altingius, Triglandii (Gisbertus & Jacobus), Arnoldus, Maresius; the four professors at Leyden, Wallæus, Rivetus, Polyander, Thysius; Wollebius, Heidegerus, Essenius, Turretinus, &c. Many eminent British di-

Ther. I will dispense with your recital of their names, only let me have a specimen of their testimonies.

Asp. First, then, let me present you with Dr Owen; than whom England has produced few writers either more judicious or more devout. "Faith," he tells us in his catechism, "is a gracious resting upon the free promises of God in Jesus Christ for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart that God is a reconciled Father to us in the Son of his love." Next let me introduce the learned and justly celebrated Altingius, professor of divinity at Heidelberg. "Faith," he says, "is a knowledge of the grace of God in Christ, together with a fiduciary reliance on it, or an application of it to a man's own self." To these let me add the unanimous suffrage of the churches of the Palatinate. It is asked, in the twenty-first question of their public catechism, "What is true faith?" To which this answer is returned: "It is not only an assent to all the truths which God has revealed in his word; but it is an assured trust wrought by the Holy Spirit in my heart, that remission of sins, complete righteousness and eternal life are given, freely given, not to others only, but to myself; and all this from the mere mercy of God, through the alone merits of Christ."

vines; Bishops Babington, Davenant, Hall; Messrs Perkins, Pemble, Willet, Gouge, Rogers, Burgess, Owen, Marshall, &c.

If we were apparently and demonstrably in an error, yet, to err with such company, and in the footsteps of such guides, must very much tend to mitigate the severity of censure. But, I believe, few serious persons will venture to charge error and delusion upon such a venerable body of Protestant divines; so eminent for their learning, and so exemplary for their holiness; whose labours were so remarkably owned by God, and whose sentiments, on this particular subject, have been adopted by so many reformed churches. The declarations of the English and Palatine churches are produced in the dialogue. I have in my hand an extract from the confessions and standard doctrines of the church—of Scotland—of Ireland—of France—of Helvetia; with all which Aspasio has the happiness to agree. Only some of them are much stronger in displaying and maintaining the special *fiducia*, or the appropriating persuasion of faith. To quote them, would dignify and strengthen the cause. But, to avoid prolixity, I forego this advantage.

These testimonies are but as the tithe to the whole crop: yet these are more than enough to exempt me from the charge of singularity. You will not wonder, therefore, if I still abide by the good old Protestant doctrine, which is espoused by so many of the ablest judges; which was the darling tenet of almost all our reformers; which has been so signally instrumental in demolishing the superstitions of Popery; and is so evidently conducive to the holiness and the happiness of Christians. Especially, as I apprehend, the determinations of Scripture, and the experience of scriptural saints, are all on my side.

Ther. You have now brought the cause to the proper bar. When a question so important is debated, and an interest so momentous is concerned, I cannot acquiesce in any authority less than divine. I cannot, and indeed I think we ought not. Nothing should satisfy us on such an occasion but the word, which is unerring and decisive; the word, by which we are to stand or fall eternally. Whence does it appear that the determinations of this divine word are on your side?

Asp. From the noblest description of faith which language itself can form. The writer to the Hebrews, having mentioned the life of faith, the perseverance of faith, and the end or reward of faith, proceeds to a definition of this leading grace. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. "The evidence," exhibiting not a faint surmise, but a clear demonstration, both of invisible blessings, and of our right to enjoy them. "The substance," realizing what is promised; and giving us, as it were, a possession of good things that are remote, a present possession of good things that are future.

Ther. What are those blessings, and these good things?

Asp. I will inform my Theron; and in such a manner, from such passages, as shall farther ascertain my representation of faith. What says the

apostle of the Gentiles? "I preached unto you the gospel," 1 Cor. xv. 1. And what is the substance of this evangelical dispensation? "Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. That so exalted a person as the Son of God, and Lord of glory, should die, is wonderful! That he should die for sins, the most abominable objects, and for sinners, the most detestable creatures, is abundantly more wonderful! That he should die, not for sins in general, but for our sins in particular, this is inexpressibly wonderful, and at the same time inexpressibly comfortable. Here we have the gospel and its capital blessing expressed in this proposition, "Christ died for our sins." Here we have faith and its principle acting expressed in this proposition, "Christ died for our sins." Till the former is preached, the doctrine is not gospel; till the latter is believed, it should seem, from St Paul's account, the conviction is not faith.

Let me introduce another instance, extracted, like the preceding, from the rolls of heaven: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life," 1 John v. 11.; not proposed it, on I know not what condition, but hath given—freely and fully, without any reserve, and with a liberality suited to his inconceivable goodness, hath given the richest of all prizes; and not to some only, or to others, but to us, even to us.

Ther. Us, that is, the apostles and exalted saints.

Asp. Was eternal life given them because they were apostles? No, verily; but because Christ died for them. Did Christ die for them, because they were exalted saints? In no wise; but because they were miserable sinners. Eternal life was purchased for them when they were sinners. It was consigned over to them when they were sinners. And neither the purchase nor the gift were founded on their being saints, but aimed at making them so.

That "Christ died for our sins," that "God hath given to us eternal life;" these are the blessings of which faith is the evidence; these the good things of

which faith is the substance. This is the honey in the evangelical hive; and I am at a loss to conceive how we can taste the honey, without some appropriation of the good things to ourselves. This, if I mistake not, is comprehended in all those figurative descriptions of faith which occur in holy writ.

Ther. Favour me with some of those descriptions. I begin to see a peculiar beauty, and an unequalled richness, in the figures of Scripture. Nothing yields me a more refined pleasure, than to investigate and discover the exact sense of those instructive images. It is somewhat like kindling the consecrated incense; which, when rising in a flame, diffused light; when spreading in clouds of fragrance, distributed refreshment.

Asp. Faith is styled, "a looking unto Jesus." But if we do not look unto Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight? "A receiving of Christ." But can I have any pretence to receive him, or take possession of his merits, unless I am convinced that they are intended for me? This is what neither the dictates of conscience will allow, nor the laws of reason authorize. "A resting upon Christ." But how can we rest on a surety, if he has not interposed on our behalf? or how confide in a payment, which we believe to be made for others, not for ourselves?—Surely, Theron, when I rest upon an object, I use it as my support: When I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. And when the Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular person for himself.

Ther. To cast ourselves upon Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, and rely upon him for our whole salvation—is not this real faith? This is what I heard some time ago from a celebrated pulpit.

Asp. If you rely on the all-sufficiency of his will, as well as of his power; if you take the comfort and appropriate the benefit resulting from both; you practise the very thing I recommend. This is what

was taught from the pulpit of infallibility; and by those first of preachers, who spake as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance. Let the convinced sinner, and the afflicted soul, "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Let him not only reverence Christ as the incarnate God, and therefore mighty to save; but look upon Christ as his God, and therefore willing to save. Thus let him "lean upon the Rock of ages," Isa. l. 10. without indulging a doubt concerning his right to make use of it, or the possibility of its failing him.

To "cast ourselves upon Christ; to cast our burden," or "to cast all our care (Επιῤῥιψαντες) upon the Lord," 1 Pet. v. 7.; are metaphors, which may receive some elucidation from an incident recorded in the Acts. When the mariners and passengers which sailed with St Paul, saw their vessel shattered, saw the waves prevailing, saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship, they cast themselves (Απορῤῥιψαντες) upon the floating planks, Acts xxvii. 43. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple, not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to those supporters with a cheerful confidence, not doubting but, according to the apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land. Be this what people mean when they speak of venturing or casting themselves upon Christ, and I approve the expression, I subscribe the doctrine. It speaks what I wish for my friend, for myself, and for my fellow-sinners.

Let us shift our situation, and view the point in another light. Consider the blessed and glorious object of our faith. Christ is represented by the similitude of bread, heavenly bread for the hungry soul. Faith is characterized by eating the food. And can this be done without a personal application? Christ is held forth under the image of living waters, ever running, and always free for the thirsty appetite. But let them run ever so copiously, let them be presented ever so freely, all this will neither quench the thirst,

nor refresh the spirits, unless they are drank. To do this is the business of faith. Christ is described as a garment, to accommodate destitute, and beautify deformed creatures. Faith is expressed by putting on this commodious garment, and wearing this beautiful robe. And can any idea, or any expression, more strongly denote an actual appropriation?

Ther. It is evident, that many holy people, in former ages, were not possessed of assurance. What is the language of David? It is all despondency: "I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes." To the same melancholy tune is the harp of Asaph strung: "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?" The same jealous and distrustful air breathes in the complaint of the church. "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Why then should my Aspasio set up a rule stricter and higher than those eminent saints attained?

Asp. You should rather ask, Why have the best judges and the most exemplary Christians, in their several writings, set up this rule? Why have the apostles of our Lord, and the Spirit of our God, speaking in the Bible, set up this rule? To which I might reply, Because it is, of all precepts, the most beneficial. Therefore they have not so much set it up under the notion of a strict rule, as they have set it forth under the character of a choice blessing.

Your complaint, when put into its proper language, seems to run thus: "Why must we be obliged to trust in Christ alone? Why must we be obliged to assure ourselves of salvation by him?" Whereas, instead of a complaint, it should be matter of exultation, and we should rather express ourselves in this manner: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, that a sinner, such a vile sinner, should be allowed to take Christ and all his salvation as my own; and thus to assure myself of pardon, holiness, and glory."

This blessing was certainly enjoyed by the holy men of old; but, like every other species of felicity in *this* world, it was enjoyed after an imperfect manner.

They had an assured persuasion of God's present favour, and of their own final happiness. Nevertheless, this assured persuasion was liable to the assaults, both of outward temptations and of inward corruptions; which might for a while impair its vigour, though not destroy its being; as under a transient swoon the spirits fail, the colour departs, but the vital principle subsists.

You may farther observe, concerning those pious persons, that, when they cease to exercise this confidence of faith, they lament the failure: "I said, This is my infirmity," Psalm lxxvii. 10. They chide themselves for it: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" They encourage themselves against it: "Hope in God," Psalm xlii. 5.; it is thy unquestionable privilege. How could they do this—on what grounds, or from what motive—if they had not a secret persuasion that their ransom was paid, and their God reconciled; consequently, that all their doubts were an injury to his fidelity and to his goodness?

Nay, the church, even under her darkest apprehensions, still speaks the sentiment, still retains the grace, for which I am pleading: "My Lord," uttered with her lips, argues an applicatory faith in her heart. So copious and pregnant are the evidences of this precious doctrine! It is confirmed by that very passage which was produced for its confutation.

Ther. If this be the sentiment of the church in general, is it also the temper of her particular members? Was each of them animated by this firm and lively faith?

Asp. Let these particular persons appear, and answer for themselves. Hear the declaration of the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name," Psalm ciii. 1, 2. What is the cause of this holy transport and devout praise? Is it, because God possibly may; because he probably will? No; but because he actually does forgive: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Take notice of Job's belief, and Job's support, amidst his

unexampled sufferings: "I know that my Redeemer liveth:" not only that there is a Redeemer, but that he is, together with all his saving benefits, mine; which, being a truth so sweet and delightful, is expressed a second time: "Whom I shall see for myself," Job xix. 25—27.; to my own advantage and for my own comfort: see him exerting his almighty power and infinite mercy, to rescue my body from the grave, and to deliver my soul from hell. What was Habakkuk's security, amidst the threatening, the tremendous, the triumphant malice, of his own and his country's enemies? "The Lord God is my strength." He says not, I wish, I pray, for the divine favour and the divine succour; but I am persuaded they both are mine; my inestimable portion, and my inviolable safeguard. "He will make my feet like hinds' feet," that I shall perfectly escape from all danger; "and he will make me walk upon mine high places," beyond the reach of every evil, Hab. iii. 19.

Ther. Is this the language of believers under the New Testament dispensation?

Asp. Under every dispensation, Theron. They who lived before the law, "were persuaded" (πεισθεντες) of the promises; had not the least distrust with regard to the certainty of their performance; nay, they "embraced them" (ασπασαμενοι) as their own; they hugged them, as it were, to their very souls; Heb. 11, 13. They who lived under the law could say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us," Psalm ciii. 12. And can you imagine, in the days of the gospel, when our advantages are greater and our light is clearer, that our faith should be weaker, or our hope fainter? St Peter makes a profession, which excludes all doubting: "I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed," 1 Pet. v. 1. St Paul answers in the same heroic strain: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor any creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of

God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord," Rom. viii. 39. With both which, the confession of faith recorded by St Luke is exactly correspondent: "We believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they," Acts xv. 11.

Ther. Was not this a privilege peculiar to the apostles?

Asp. By no means. All believers are brethren, and have "like precious faith." Hear how St Peter exhorts all his people: "Gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end;" or, as the word should rather be translated, hope perfectly, hope assuredly, "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"* 1 Pet. i. 13. Maintain, not a dim, but a bright hope; not a wavering, but a steady expectation of eternal life; that free but grand gift, of which the Lord Jesus, at his second coming, shall put you in full possession. The apostle, writing to his Hebrew converts, encourages them all to "hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6. From whence it is deducible, that a trust amounting to confidence, and the joy which naturally results from such a trust, were the common portion of Christians; possessed, not barely by some few exalted saints, but by the followers of Jesus in general. I might bring many more instances. But why should I multiply proofs, since the beloved disciple declares, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that ye have eternal life?"

Ther. True, Aspasio. This coincides with my apprehensions. The Scriptures are written,—first, that we may believe, and be entitled to eternal life; —next, that we may have the knowledge of our belief, and a consciousness of our title. The apostle

* Εις τελος or μεχρι τελους, signify "to the end." But τελειως, as far as I can recollect, is never used in this sense, either by sacred or profane writers. It may be rendered *perfecte*, *integre*, in this connexion, *cum firma fiducia*, with a firm affiance.

supposes his correspondents to possess the former, yet not to have attained the latter.

Asp. Is it certain that he makes such a supposition? He writes, I imagine, not with a view of leading them to either, but of confirming them in both. He intimates, that the privilege and the comfort should go together. If we believe that Christ is our surety; we should be persuaded, that he has paid our debt, and satisfied justice to the very uttermost farthing. If we believe that Christ is our bridegroom; we should rest assured, that his righteousness, his inheritance, and his kingdom, are ours. And why should we take pains to separate what God's word and the very nature of things have united? Will this turn to our advantage? must it not issue in our loss? Besides, according to your own interpretation, whoever falls short of this cheering knowledge, falls short of one great end for which the Scriptures were written. He receives not his full reward: He only gleans where he might reap; is tossed on the ocean of uncertainty: whereas "they that have believed" have gained the port, have dropped their anchor, and enter into rest," Heb. iv. 3.

Ther. Believed! What? that our sins are laid upon Christ? that he was obedient in our stead? that all spiritual blessings are thereby procured for our —even for our enjoyment?

Asp. The blessings you mention are evidently the purport of the gospel. And I know of no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the gospel, and believes its report, Isa. liii. 1. Nor can I think, that any other belief will administer the tranquillity, or produce the rest, specified by the apostle. But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controversy. This is the precise point to be settled, What it is to believe? what is included in this very important word? —This question might renew our dispute, and cause the past arguments to recur: whereas, I would gladly get rid of disputation. We have already been *too long* detained in these disagreeable paths. How-

ever, since you have given the occasion, I may just touch upon another text or two. For I would willingly drive this nail to the head, and not leave my friend unconvinced on a subject of the utmost consequence.

The Lord declares by his prophet, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." To believe is to subscribe this declaration; to subscribe with our hand, and profess from our heart, "Lord, it is done, as thou hast said." Faith is, if I may so speak, the echo of the divine voice. It eagerly catches, and punctually reverberates, the joyful sound. Does God say, "Thou art my people?" Faith replies, "Thou art my God," Hos. ii. 23.; not barely desiring, but confidently averring an interest in his favour. This explanation of faith is given us by a wisdom which cannot be deceived, by a fidelity which cannot deceive. Once more: Our Lord bears this testimony concerning Thomas, "Thomas, thou hast believed." Now then, I think, we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine what that is which Jesus Christ calls believing. Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal. And this, this is the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God," John xx. 28, 29. This, this expresses what our divine Master calls believing. When, therefore, we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that Jesus is our Lord, who bought us with his blood; that Jesus is our God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe, in our Saviour's sense of the word; we have that faith which he allows to be genuine.

Ther. Is this the constant language of faith? According to this account, there is no difference between the infant and the adult; between the new-born babe, and the full-grown man, in Christ. Your spiritual children, Aspasio, must be men from their birth; nay, born in all the vigour of manhood: whereas, the apostle makes an evident difference between the babes, the young men, and the fathers; between faith, the

assurance of faith, and the full assurance of faith. If we are told of a patriarch, who was "strong in faith," we read of some Roman converts, who were "weak in the faith;" and we hear our Lord speaking to disciples, who were "fearful, and of little faith."

Asp. Between faith, and the full assurance of faith, the apostle makes a difference. The one is the most exalted pitch, where the other is but an inferior elevation. Yet both are rounds of the same ladder. I do not remember, that the sacred writer any where distinguishes between faith and assurance. Πιστις and Πιπεοιθμασις, *faith* and *confidence*, are joined in the epistle to the Ephesians. It is the opinion of the best critics, that the sense of the latter is included in the former. The critics' opinion is confirmed by the apostle's declaration, "We have access with confidence through faith," Eph. iii. 12. Could yonder sun diffuse warmth through the air, if it had no warmth in itself? No more could faith produce confidence in the believer, if in its own nature it did not contain the same.

The case of little faith, I think, may be explained from our Lord's own expostulation: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Here was a faith, not only in Christ's power, but also in his will. Nay, here was an appropriating faith, by which the apostle applied both to himself: "I verily believe, that my divine Master is able to preserve me, even though I venture to tread upon this tempestuous sea. I am persuaded likewise, that he will uphold me, and not suffer his servant to perish in the hazardous enterprise." Nothing less than this could have produced that hazardous enterprise, or have imboldened him to walk upon the rolling billows.

Do you not discern, in this instance, some degree of personal application, some real assurance of faith? It is true, this faith was violently assaulted by doubts, and greatly enfeebled by fears.* Yet still it was of the

* I must beg of the candid reader to take particular notice of this limitation; and must entreat the impartial examiner, not to forget this *concession*. We no where suppose, that a freedom from all fears, or

applicatory kind. "He can, he will," were expressive of its nature; though the boisterous winds, and the terrifying appearance of things, almost drowned its voice, or stifled the words in their utterance.

Ther. If you allow no difference between faith and confidence, I am very sure St John puts a difference between babes, young men, and fathers.

Asp. He does, Theron; and so would I. Neither can I think of any thing more proper to explain my meaning, or establish my tenet, than your own comparison. In some fruitful family, you may see one child in leading-strings; another able to walk by itself; a third come home, improved and cultivated, from the school of literature. Observe their speech. One lisps out a few broken sentences; another talks intelligibly, but very incorrectly: the last has learned to express himself with tolerable propriety. Yet each speaks the same language, notwithstanding the various degrees of fluency in their utterance, or purity in their diction. So faith always speaks one and the same uniform language. Whether she lisps or stammers; whether she whispers in faint accents, or raises her voice in a more manly tone; this is still the unvaried import of her speech: "God, even our own God, will give us his blessing." Can you forget how St John addresses even his little children? "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven," 1 John ii. 12.

Ther. Will not this account discourage some, and offend others, who are not arrived at such an exalted pitch?

Asp. I would not offend the meanest, nor discourage the weakest of my Redeemer's servants. As for offence, that cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all we advance is strictly conformable to

a superiority to all doubts, are included in the nature of faith. We only affirm, that an appropriating persuasion or assurance are necessary to the being of faith. This assurance may be encumbered with doubts, and may conflict with fears. But still it is assurance—real assurance —and proves itself to be such, by opposing and struggling with the *contrary principle.*

the unerring oracles. Whereas, to qualify and attenuate the scriptural descriptions of faith, in complaisance to our own experience; to make the unhappy fluctuations and unworthy suspicions, which possess the breasts of some particular Christians—to make them the rule of explaining, or the measure of enforcing so capital a duty—this, sure, would be an offence to God, an injury to his word, and detrimental to the welfare of souls.

With regard to discouragement, I cannot conceive how this should ensue from informing the poor sinner that he has a right to apply Christ, and all Christ's merits, to himself; or from exhorting the poor sinner to do this, without any hesitation, and with a resolute dependence. In this case, to doubt is to be discouraged: as much as you want certainty, so much you want consolation. The proper way to comfort these distressed people is, not to allow, but to dissipate their doubts; to blow away those dead ashes, that the smothered embers may shine and glow.

Were we to inquire after the cause of that disquietude and despondency which are so common among modern professors, I am inclined to suspect we should find it lying hid in their wrong apprehensions, both of Christ and of faith. They look upon Christ, as a rigorous and forbidding monarch, who insists upon some hard terms and high qualifications. Whereas, his heart and his arms are ever open; his heart as open, as infinite love can set it; his arms as open, as infinite merit can make them. They look upon faith as containing a possibility only, or, at most, a probability, of salvation through his name. It is with them a kind of peradventure; a situation of mind fluctuating and pendulous. "Perhaps I may succeed and be eternally blessed: Perhaps I may be rejected and eternally ruined." Such a state of suspense, in an affair of everlasting consequence, cannot but create uneasiness and anxiety.

This uneasiness and anxiety seem to have been little known in the earlier and better days of the church.

And why? Because Christians were then exposed to the rage of persecution? Because they were placed nearer the time of Christ's sojourning on earth? I rather think, because they were taught this particular and comfortable application of Christ and his righteousness. They exercised a confident affiance on Jesus, as their own Redeemer; and were shewn a more direct way to obtain this assurance, than merely to search after their own renewed qualities.

Ther. Surely, Aspasio, in this particular you differ, not from me only, but from the generality of the orthodox.

Asp. I am sorry to find myself under a necessity of differing from any worthy persons, much more of disagreeing with the generality. This I can safely aver, that it is not from any affectation of novelty, or any fondness for disputing, but from a disinterested regard to the truth of the gospel. I should be glad to have the concurrence of all the serious, and all the pious; but I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments, by diminishing the boundless riches of grace, or restricting the absolute freeness of salvation by Christ.

You are pleased to remind me of the orthodox. Pray, my dear friend, what is the standard of orthodoxy? Is it the word of revelation? This speaks once, yea twice, nay, some hundreds of times, in our favour. Is it the doctrine of our reformers from Popery? With these we jar not, but exactly harmonize. Is it to be taken from the old confessions of faith, and the catechisms of Protestant churches? To these we appeal, and have the sanction of their authority. Has the modern way of treating and stating this momentous subject so much to allege for its support?

Let me farther ask,—Are we better than our fathers? Is Christianity in a thriving condition, or practical religion on the advancing hand? The reverse, the melancholy reverse, is undeniably true. When our writers enforced, and our preachers urged *what I am defending*, professors were alive, and ani-

mated with the power of godliness: Whereas now we seem to be degenerated into the mere form; we "have a name to live, but are" languid, listless, and if not "dead," Rev. iii. 1. yet ready to die. It behoves us therefore to consider whether the declension, the decays, the unfruitfulness, so justly lamented in the present age, be not owing to the absence of this appropriating belief, or this assured persuasion.

A sweet assurance of pardon, a comfortable persuasion of our reconciliation with God, an established hope of eternal glory through Jesus Christ; these will be operative in the soul, as "a torch in the sheaf." These will enkindle love, and increase watchfulness; these will beget the true humility of mind, and work an unfeigned abhorrence of sin; these will enlarge the heart with charity, and exalt the affections above the world. These are the proper, and the only effectual means of "making the man of God perfect," that is, "thoroughly furnished to every good work."*

But the doubting frame is not fitted to yield any of these fruits. Nay, I am apprehensive there are several graces which can hardly be exercised, several duties which can scarcely be performed, so long as this spirit of diffidence prevails.

Ther. Name them, Aspasio.

Asp. I am afraid, lest I should seem to arrogate the office of a teacher; which neither becomes my condition, nor is agreeable to my temper.

Ther. I beseech you, my dear friend, let us wave ceremony, and have nothing to do with compliments. My soul is in jeopardy. My present comfort, and

* For the display and confirmation of these points, I do, with great pleasure, and without any diffidence, refer to Mr Marshall's "Gospel Mystery of Sanctification;" which I shall not recommend in the style of a critic, or like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest Christian; I mean, from my own experience. It has been made one of the most useful books to my own soul: I scarce ever fail to receive spiritual consolation and strength from the perusal of it. And was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed *only of* two books beside my Bible, this should be one of the two, and *perhaps the* first that I would choose.

my everlasting happiness are at stake. And shall we suffer any little punctilios to overbear such weighty considerations?

Suppose you are a teacher; I have great need, and am very desirous to become your scholar. For I freely confess, that, knowing as I may seem in other instances, I am very ignorant in the great peculiarities of the gospel. Nay, though I have read the Scriptures in a critical view, I have been an utter stranger to their spiritual meaning. Here I am uninstructed as a babe: Here, therefore, I ought to be teachable as a babe. Yes, in this respect I would become as a little child, that I may enter into the knowledge, and possess the privileges, of the kingdom of heaven.

Asp. Your answer, Theron, shall be a law. "Love to God" is the first commandment; and, without all peradventure, is the principal grace. But is it easy, is it possible, to love God, before we have any persuasion of his love to us? This is what the apostles did not, could not do. And, if it exceeded their ability, it will doubtless be above the reach of our capacity. The thing may be attempted; the practice may be urged; we may see the necessity of it, and desire to perform it; but we shall never, never be able to exercise it, till we have some comfortable apprehension of God's reconciliation and good-will to us. "We love him." Wherefore? from what inducement? "Because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 10.; and because this love hath been made evident to our consciences by the light of faith.

What think you of "delight in God?" This also is a Christian grace. But "how can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We never covet an intimacy with the person who declares himself our enemy. Nay, if there be only a suspicion that he bears us a secret ill-will, we shall be jealous of trusting him, and averse to approach him. This was the case of our first parents, immediately after the fall. Instead of drawing near to their Creator with pleasure and gratitude, they fled from him with anxiety and terror.

And why? Because they were under the alarming apprehensions of his displeasure. Whereas, let us once believe what the apostle affirms, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10.; let us cordially credit what the prophet repeatedly declares, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you," Isa. xxx. 18.; then we shall seek his face with alacrity; our affections will be on the wing to salute their almighty Benefactor; we shall "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Ther. To the enjoyment of so many spiritual consolations, and the exercise of several delightful graces, I acknowledge, an assured faith is necessary; but—

Asp. Ay, Theron, you may well hesitate. It will be difficult to fill up the chasm in your discourse. For my part, I know not any duty of holiness which can be performed aright, without some degree of this confiding faith. We are to "walk worthy of him who hath called us to his kingdom and glory," 1 Thess. ii. 12.; but if we doubt whether we in particular are called, how can this influence our conversation? We are to be "followers of God, as his dear children," Eph. v. 1. But if we do not, cannot, will not believe, so as to cry, "Abba, Father," how can such a consideration sway our hearts? Nay, upon what principles can such a person address himself to discharge any office of the Christian life? We are to "abound in the works of the Lord," from the animating prospect of a glorious resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. This he cannot do; because he apprehends himself to have no lot or portion in the blessed hope. We are to open our hands in charity to others, from a view of that heavenly kingdom which was prepared for us from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, on account of those precious promises which *are freely* given to us in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *But where* unbelieving doubts predominate, these

endearing and invigorating motives are lost. The man has no interest in the encouraging promises, has no title to the blissful inheritance; consequently, these sinews of evangelical obedience, with respect to him, are benumbed, withered, dead.

Ther. Such a man may make prayers and supplications. Though he cannot rejoice in the privileges, he may request them at the throne of grace.

Asp. Prayer is a great duty, and as great a privilege. I wish my dear Theron the spirit of grace and supplication. This will be better, incomparably better, and more advantageous, than a key to hidden treasures. But how can you pray with humble boldness, or with lively hope, unless you believe? believe that Christ is your High-priest—is your intercessor with the Father, and, with the incense of his infinite merit, presents your petitions? Then, and then only, can you have what the apostle calls "boldness and access with confidence,"* Eph. iii. 12. Take notice of these vigorous expressions, and at your leisure consider whether they countenance the suspicious and misgiving temper. At present observe how yonder lark warbles and mounts in the firmament, as if she was bidding adieu to the earth, and going to mingle with the skies! An image this of believing prayer.—Should a fowler shoot the soaring songster through the wing, how would she fall from her elevation, and flutter on the ground! An emblem that of distrusting prayer.

I know not how to leave this subject, without attending to the testimony of St James, than which nothing can be more awful, or more decisive. It

* Προσαγωγη, "access with a cheering and graceful assurance;" such as those petitioners enjoy who are introduced to the royal presence by some distinguished favourite. Παρρησια, "a boldness or unrestrained liberty of speech;" such as children use when they present their addresses, and make known their requests, to an indulgent father. Εν πεποιθησει, "with a well-grounded and steady confidence," that we shall both obtain a favourable acceptance and a gracious answer. And all this "through the faith of Christ; through the worthiness of his person, and the prevalence of his intercession.

should really alarm the doubting disposition as much as any solicitation to the most horrid sin. It should alarm the whole religious world as much as the beacons suddenly kindled, and all on a flame, would alarm the inhabitants of the maritime coasts. "Let him pray in faith, nothing doubting;* for he that doubteth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind, and tossed," James i. 6. Nay, the apostle adds, —and it is an addition greatly to be regarded; it should abide with weight on our consciences; for it comes from a casuist who could neither be too indulgent, through an excess of compassion, nor too rigorous, through an extravagance of zeal,—"Let not that man," the doubting supplicant, "think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

Never then, my worthy friend, never more be an advocate for doubtings. Pursue them with fire and sword. Give them no quarter. Deal with them as Saul was commanded to treat the Amalekites.

Ther. If we are grieved at the remembrance of past sin, and feel an aversion to all sin; if the prevailing bias of our affections be to the divine Redeemer, and the habitual breathing of our souls after a conformity to his image; may we not suppose ourselves possessed of the truth and reality, though we have not the confidence and rejoicing, of faith? I say we, because I apprehend this is not my peculiar case, but common to myself and many other Christians of the weaker sort. I ask, therefore, in their name and in my own, May we not humbly suppose our condition safe, though we do not presume to use the language of the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his?"

Asp. So you are still inclined to spare Agag, because delicately and speciously disguised under the

* "Nothing doubting," is the apostle's explanation of faith. Μηδὲν διακρινόμενος is, in our translation, "nothing wavering." But the very same expression is rendered, Acts x. 20. "nothing doubting." The sense is either way alike: Though I think "nothing wavering" corresponds too nearly with the comparison, "like a wave;" makes something of a disagreeable jingle; and flattens the force, or supersedes the necessity, of the following illustration.

appearance of tenderness to weak souls. I should have thought the text from St James must have done execution like the prophet Samuel's sword; but since corrosives succeed not, let us make trial of lenitives.

When the great Jehovah is pleased to say, "I am the Lord thy God;" then, upon this authentic warrant, to use the language of the spouse is neither more nor less than to declare, "I am persuaded that Christ is faithful and true, that he speaks what he thinks, and will do what he says." Whereas, to deny this by downright unbelief, or to question this by living in suspense, is not humble duty, but proud disobedience. Might not the Lord Jesus justly complain, "What iniquity have sinners found in me?" what unkindness, or what unfaithfulness, that they are so much afraid of confiding in my grace, and of believing my word?

You ask, Whether the state of these persons is safe, and their faith real? I answer, why should not their state be happy, and their faith assured? Why should you, or they, or any one, plead the cause of unbelief, and veil it with the plausible pretext of humility? Let these persons know, whatever their names or their circumstances are, that they have as good a right to adopt the words of the spouse, as we have to walk in these gardens, and enjoy their refined delights. Yet they will do well to remember, that those qualifications, however amiable, are by no means the ground of their right. They are to advance their claim, and hold fast the blessing, not as men ornamented with fine endowments, but as poor, indigent, guilty sinners. For such the Saviour is provided; to such his benefits are proposed, and on such his grace will be magnified.

Ther. Do you elude my question, or give up your point? One or the other my Aspasio certainly does.

Asp. Since my friend so peremptorily affirms, I will not have the ill manners to deny. I will own the former charge; the latter I cannot admit. I will own, that at present I had much rather act as a com-

forter than as a disputant. On some other occasion I will undertake to consider, and endeavour to answer all your objections. In the mean time, I am far from giving up the point, barely by inquiring, why such persons should lose their time, and perhaps embarrass their minds, in these less profitable suppositions, when there is a direct, a compendious, and a certain method of obtaining peace, by appropriating Christ and his merits, without recurring to any such qualifications?

Nevertheless, if you insist upon a positive reply, I am obliged to declare, that faith consists in none of those qualifications which you describe. The language of faith is not—"I feel such an aversion; I am actuated with such a bias; or I breathe such a desire:" But—"God has freely loved me; Christ has graciously died for me; and the Holy Ghost will assuredly sanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief, of these precious truths."*

But see, Theron! Yonder black and low-hung cloud points this way. It seems big with a shower; it marches on apace, and will soon be over our heads. We must instantly fly to shelter.

Ther. It is well we have this summer-house for our shelter. The thickest boughs would be insufficient to screen us. I think, I never saw a more impetuous burst of rain. A shower! No, it is a descending deluge. The large, ropy, reeking drops, come down like a torrent. Surprising! What a dreadful flash was there! A sheet of sulphureous fire, launched from the dismal gloom, and wrapping the whole skies in a blaze! Not a moment's interval between the lightning's rage and the thunder's roar. How sudden and vast the explosion! What a deep, prolonged, tremendous peal ensues! It seems as if the poles of earth and the pillars of nature cracked!

See, my dear Aspasio, see the direful havock, the

* If the reader finds this Dialogue too long, here he will have a convenient resting-place.

horrid effects of this elementary tumult. Yonder oak, which reared its towering head aloft, and spread wide its graceful branches, is, in the twinkling of an eye, turned into a naked trunk. There it stands, singed and tore; stripped of its verdant honours,* and surrounded with its own shattered fragments. How fearful is the artillery of heaven!

Asp. And why—why did not the blow fall on this guilty breast? Why was not the fiery bolt, which flew so near, commissioned to pierce our hearts? If our heavenly Father has been so tenderly careful of these perishing bodies, will he not be much more gracious to our immortal souls? Will he not clothe them with that immaculate robe, which is the only security from the stroke of eternal vengeance? And let me ask, Can this be a security to us, unless we are vested with it? Could this building, though very substantial, have secured us from the rushing rains, if we had not betaken ourselves to its friendly covert?

Christ is represented, in the prophecy of Isaiah, by this very image; as "a place of refuge, and as a covert from the storm and from rain," Isa. iv. 6. That is, his merits and death are a sure protection from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No fury of the elements so terrible as these; no bulwark of stone so impregnable as those. If this is a proper emblem of Christ, to what shall we liken faith? To a persuasion, that the shelter of the summer-house is free for our use? To a high esteem of its accommodation, an earnest desire after its protection, or an habitual tendency towards it? Would this defend us from the inclemencies of the weather? Would this keep us dry, amidst (what you call) the descending deluge? Would this esteem, desire, or tendency, unless carried into actual entrance and possession,

* Does not this give us the most awful and grand sense of Psal. xxix. 9.? "The voice of the Lord," when uttered in thunder, and accompanied with lightning, not only "discovereth the thick bushes, but strips the forest;" lays bare the branching woods; reduces the most magnificent and flourishing cedars to naked and withered trunks.

be a proper safeguard, or indeed any manner of advantage to our persons?

Ther. No, Aspasio; neither would a persuasion that the summer-house is mine.

Asp. True; but a belief that Christ is mine, is like entering the summer-house. When the divine Spirit reveals the obedient and dying Saviour in my heart; when I am enabled to believe, that his death was the desert of my sins, and his obedience is the matter of my justification; when I live in the exercise of this appropriating faith, then I find that comfort, and I receive that benefit, which correspond with the repose and security we now enjoy from this hospitable structure.

Ther. May I then, from this instant, look upon Christ, his glorious person, his perfect righteousness, and his precious death, as my certain inheritance? May I firmly believe, that through this grand and immensely meritorious cause, I shall have pardon and acceptance, true holiness, and endless salvation?

Asp. Why should you not believe all this firmly? You have the same reason to believe with a steady confidence, as to believe with any degree of affiance. It is the free promise of the gospel, addressed to sinners, that warrants the latter; and the very same promise, under the same circumstances of unmerited munificence, authorizes the former.

You have heard my opinion; hear now what our Lord himself says: "Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. He may partake of my spiritual and unspeakable blessings, as freely as he makes use of the most common refreshments; as freely as he drinks of the running stream. This is his royal proclamation: Hear his gracious invitation: "Look unto me, and be ye saved," Isa. xlv. 22.; saved from your disquieting fears, by justification; saved from your domineering corruptions, by sanctification; saved from every evil, by complete and eternal redemption. To whom is this most affectionate call direct-

ed? Not to a few distinguished favourites only, but to "all the ends of the earth." None are excepted; none are prohibited; and can my Theron imagine that he is excluded?

Nay farther, hear our Lord's earnest entreaty; hear his tender and repeated importunity: "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. Hark! It is the voice of infinitely condescending love, speaking by his ambassador:—Sinners, accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you by my dying agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper than the spear which pierced my heart."—O! the grace of our exalted King. He bows from his celestial throne. He almost kneels to his guilty creatures. He begs, he even begs of obnoxious sinners, not to reject his mercies. After all this, can you entertain the least doubt, Theron, whether you have a permission to believe firmly?

Ther. This is extraordinary goodness indeed! I have often read these passages, but never saw them, till this hour, in a light so engaging and so encouraging.

Asp. Should not this threefold cord be strong enough to draw my dear friend, let me add (what must absolutely supersede all objections) the plain, express, peremptory command of the Almighty: "This is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. Pray, examine the language; not he allows only, or barely advises, but commands. We are not only permitted, but strictly required. It is not only our privilege, but God's positive injunction. Upon the discovery of such a Saviour, methinks every heart should cry, "O that I might be allowed to approach him! to solicit an interest in him! How gladly would I wait, ever so long a time, in ever so mean a posture, if I might at the last receive him as my portion!" The superabundant goodness of God prevents our wishes,

and exceeds our hopes. "I freely give my Son," saith the Lord, "and all his riches, to you. I beseech you as a compassionate friend, not to refuse him. I enjoin you as an uncontrollable sovereign, to believe on him."—How gracious! most amazingly gracious is this command! And give me leave to hint, it is the greatest and most important command that ever issued from the throne of glory. If this be neglected, no others can be kept; if this be observed, all others will be easy. Now, Theron, will you not receive Christ, and look upon his all-sufficient merits as your own? Is not your warrant clear and unexceptionable? nay, is not your obligation strong and indispensable?

Ther. Truly, Aspasio, you put all my mistrustful apprehensions to the stand. Here is a proclamation from the blessed God,—seconded by his invitation—accompanied by his entreaty—and all enforced by his command. I know not what can be a fuller proof of your point, or a stronger inducement to believe.

Asp. Yes, my friend, I can produce (if such a thing be possible) stronger proof still; such as, I hope, will totally rout unbelief, and drive all her forces from the field.

God has not only invited you, entreated you, and commanded you, to live under the sweet persuasion that his Son is your Saviour; but he has given you the grandest ratification of this precious truth. He has passed his word, he has made you a firm promise; nay, he has given you many and various promises of this inestimable blessing. And "God is not a man, that he should lie; or the Son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxiii. 19. Heaven and earth may drop into nothing, sooner than one promise, or indeed one jot or tittle of his promise, should fall to the ground.

Besides this, he has given you, if I may so speak, a note under his own hand. He has recorded his promises in the Bible, and written them with an ever*lasting* pen; so that they will stand conspicuous and

indelible, like a bill drawn upon heaven, and a basis laid for faith, so long as the sun and moon endure.

Nay, he has confirmed all by the most solemn sanction imaginable—by his oath; by his own oath; by the oath of a God. Though his word is sure, and his promise immutable, he adds (astonishing condescension! adorable benignity!) he adds his oath to all. He not only speaks, but swears; swears by himself, swears by his own eternal existence, that his promises belong—to whom? Mark this particular with the most exact attention: To whom do those promises belong, which are ratified in this unequalled and inviolable manner? To the holy, the upright, the accomplished?—To those, says the Scripture, "who fly for refuge to the hope set before them," Heb. vi. 17, 18.; the hope set before them in the propitiation, the righteousness, the ineffable merits of Christ.

Ther. May I then believe, firmly believe, assuredly believe, that Jesus the Mediator, and all the rich benefits of his mediation, are mine? Pardon me, Aspasio, for reiterating the question. I am really, with respect to the obedience of faith, too much like that Saxon monarch, who, for his remissness and inactivity, was sirnamed "The Unready."*

Asp. I do more than pardon my dear Theron: I feel for him, and I sympathize with him. If there is some of that Saxon prince's disease running in his religion, I am sure there is too much of it in mine; and I fear it is an epidemical distemper. But let us reflect a moment.—Suppose any neighbour of substance and credit should bind himself, by a deliberate promise, to do you some particular piece of service;—if he should add to his promise a note under his own hand—if he should corroborate both by some authentic pledge—if he should establish all by a most awful and solemn oath;—could you suspect the sincerity of his engagement, or harbour any doubt with regard to its execution? This would be most unreasonable in any one; and to your generous temper, I am very

* Ethelred.

certain, it would be impossible. Let us remember, that God has given us all this cause for an assurance of faith, and more. Nay, I will defy the most timorous and suspicious temper to demand, from the most treacherous person on earth, a greater, stronger, fuller security, than the God of infinite fidelity has granted to you and me. After all this, one would think, diffidence itself could no longer hesitate, nor the most jealous incredulity demur. Shall we, can we withhold that affiance from the unchangeable Creator, which we could not but repose on a fallible creature?

Ther. You rouse and animate me, Aspasio. O! that I may arise, and, with the divine assistance, shake off this stupor of unbelief! Certainly, it can never be honourable to God, nor pleasing to Christ, nor profitable to ourselves.

Asp. If it be, then cherish it, maintain it, and never relinquish it. But how can it be honourable to God? It depreciates his goodness; it is a reproach to his veracity; nay, the apostle scruples not to affirm, that it "makes him a liar," 1 John v. 10. Whereas, they who believe his testimony, glorify his faithfulness, glorify his beneficence; and, as John the Baptist speaks, "set to their seal that God is true," John iii. 33.—I have been informed, that, when the late Elector of Hanover was declared, by the parliament of Great Britain, successor to the vacant throne, several persons of distinction waited upon his Highness, in order to make timely application for the most valuable preferments. Several requests of this nature were granted, and each was confirmed by a kind of promissory note. One gentleman, particularly, solicited for the mastership of the rolls. Being indulged in his desire, he was offered the same confirmation which had been vouchsafed to other successful petitioners. Upon which he seemed to be under a pang of graceful confusion and surprise; begged that he might not put the royal donor to such unnecessary trouble; at the same time protesting, that he looked upon his Highness's word as the very best ratification of his

suit. With this conduct, and this compliment, the Elector was not a little pleased. "This is the gentleman," he said, "who does me a real honour; treats me like a king; and whoever is disappointed, he shall certainly be gratified." So, we are assured by the testimony of revelation, that the patriarch, "who staggered not through unbelief, gave," and in the most signal, the most acceptable manner, "glory to God," Rom. iv. 20.

Is it "pleasing to Christ?" Quite the reverse. It dishonours his merit; it detracts from the dignity of his righteousness; it would enervate the power of his intercession. Accordingly you may observe, there is nothing which our Lord so frequently reproved in his followers, as this spirit of unbelief. What says he to his disciples, when he came down from the mount of transfiguration? "O faithless and perverse* generation!" They were perverse, because faithless. What says he to the travellers, whom he overtook in their journey to Emmaus? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Luke xxiv. 25. They were fools, because slow to believe. What says he to the apostles, after his resurrection? "Jesus upbraided them with their unbelief," Mark xvi. 14. He took no notice of their cowardly and perfidious behaviour; he inveighed against none of their other follies and infirmities; but he upbraided them with their unbelief. Not gently rebuked. No; this was a fault so unreasonable in itself, so reproachful to their Master, so pernicious to themselves, that he severely reprimanded them for it; with an air of vehemence, and with a mixture of invective.

Is it "profitable to ourselves?" Nothing less. It damps our love, and diminishes our comfort. It subjects us to that fear which hath torment; and disqualifies us for that obedience which is filial. In a word,

* Διεστραμμενη, Matth. xvii. 17. A believing state of mind is like some well-arranged and beautiful system of limbs. Unbelief dislocates the parts, distorts the harmonious frame, and disfigures its comely proportion.

this distrustful and unbelieving temper weakens every principle of piety, and impoverishes the whole soul. Whence come spiritual oscitancy and remissness? whence proceed sterility and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of Christ? St Peter ascribes them all to an habitual unbelief. Such persons, he says, "have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins," 2 Pet. i. 8, 9. In the regenerate, where it remains, it is very detrimental; for "they that will not believe shall not be established," Isa. vii. 9. In the unregenerate, where it prevails, it is absolutely destructive; and though it may not kill like an apoplexy, it wastes like a consumption. "They could not enter in because of unbelief," Heb. iii. 19.

Let us then, my dear friend, cast away this sin, which so easily besets us both. It clogs our feet; it hampers all our powers; and hinders us from running, with alacrity and speed, "the race that is set before us." What says David? "God hath spoken in his holiness," Psalm lx. 6.; hath made an express and inviolable promise, that I shall be ruler of his people Israel. "I will rejoice therefore;" away with every alarming apprehension; I will even exult and triumph. Nay more; "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth;" I will look upon the whole land as my own. I will divide it, and dispose of it, just as if it was already in my possession. Why should not you and I also say, "God hath spoken in his holiness;" hath expressly and solemnly declared, The promise of an all-sufficient Saviour is to you. "We will rejoice therefore;" confiding in this most faithful word, we will bid adieu to all disquieting fears, and make our boast of this glorious Redeemer. Yes; notwithstanding all our unworthiness, Christ and his atonement, Christ and his righteousness, are ours. God hath passed his word; and amidst all our temptations his word is our anchor; its hold is firm, and its ground immoveable.

Ther. I have heard some people distinguish between the faith of reliance, and the faith of assurance;

between the reflex and the direct act of faith. Methinks I approve these sentiments, though I dislike the terms. The sentiments are happily adapted to the relief of human infirmity; though the terms are rather too abstruse for ordinary capacities to understand.

Asp. I cannot say that I am very fond either of the one or of the other. In my opinion, they both partake too much of the subtilty of the schools; and are more likely to create perplexity than to administer godly edifying. For which reason, I should chuse to drop the difficult phrases, and not to dwell on the nice distinctions. Yet, if we must not dismiss them without some notice, I would just remark—

That the faith of reliance, in its true scriptural sense, includes or presupposes a degree of assurance. Includes; for what is reliance but a repose of the mind, which is attended with tranquillity, and excludes perturbation? How can this take place, if there be no sort of conviction that "the Lord is my light and my salvation?—Presupposes; for who would rely on a satisfaction made, without being persuaded that the satisfaction is for him and his iniquities? Reliance, separated from this persuasion, seems to be neither comfortable nor reasonable.

As to those who insist upon what they call the reflex act of faith; sure, they mistake the nature of the thing. This, if I understand them aright, is their way of arguing; "I am a new creature; I love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; I have the fruits of the Spirit: From whence it is plain, that Christ and his salvation are mine." Now, in all this procedure I cannot discern the least footstep of faith: no, not the least trace of receiving a testimony, or relying upon a Saviour. Here is nothing more than a logical deduction of one proposition from another; a conclusion drawn from given premises. Grant the latter, and any person, without any aid from the Spirit, will infer the former. It may, therefore, more properly be reckoned an act of reasoning than of believing; it is

founded on what we ourselves feel, not upon the record of a faithful God; and it is styled by judicious writers, the assurance of sense rather than of faith.

When, in conformity to the aforementioned opinion, we are advised to prove our title to comfort, by genuine marks of conversion, and taught on this column to fix the capital of assurance, I would rather propose a question than advance objections. Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip?

Ther. No, say they; it was the practice of the apostle himself; and he has left it upon record, as a pattern for all posterity to copy. "We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Asp. Observe, Theron, the process of the apostle's reasoning. It is like the form of an inverted cone; where you have first the point, and from thence proceed to the base. So the sacred writer begins with the less, and ascends to the greater proof. He says, in one of the following verses, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life," 1 John iii. 16. not merely for sinners, but for us in particular. Here, you see, is assurance by the direct act of faith. From this truth believed, from this blessing received, the love of the brethren takes its rise; which may very justly be admitted as an evidence that our faith is real, and our assurance no delusion: As yonder leaves may serve to distinguish the particular species, and ascertain the healthy state of the trees on which they grow.

When your tenants bring in their rent, this affords no contemptible evidence that the lands which they respectively occupy are yours. But this is a proof which does not occur every day, or every week; it is occasional only, and of the subordinate kind. The grand demonstration, that which is always at hand, and always forcible, is your possession of the deeds of conveyance. Thus, the promise of God in his divine *word* is our charter, or the authentic conveyance of

our right to pardon and salvation. Make just the same difference between this promise and your own holiness, as you make between the writings of your estate and the receival of the revenues; you will then judge aright, because your judgment will coincide with the apostle's.

Besides, this method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple-minded, and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the marks be what you please, a love of the brethren or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like the stars at noonday, not easily, if at all discernible; or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering rather than shining; consequently will yield, at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence. If, in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! how retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall before the tempest; or be "as the rush without mire, or the flag without water," Job viii. 11.

Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord—assert and maintain my title on this unalterable ground: "Pardon is mine, I would say grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. Why? because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast? Rather because 'God hath spoken in his holiness;' because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel, with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God."

Cast your eye into yonder meadow. Take notice of that industrious fisherman, how intent he is upon

the pursuit of his business. He has just thrown his net, and taken a considerable booty. You do not see him spending his time in idle triumphs, on account of his success: He does not stand to measure the dimensions of the fish, or compute the value of his prize: But having, without delay, secured the captives, he prepares for another cast, and hopes for another draught.

So let us, instead of exulting in any past acquisitions, seek afresh to the inexhaustible fulness of our Saviour for renewed communications. If we have been blessed with any taste of his goodness, or any tokens of his love, let us not too fondly dote upon the sweetness of such experiences. Let us not make them the foundation of our confidence, but only so many encouragements to persevere and advance in believing; that, having life and having peace from our divine Head, we may have them "more abundantly," John x. 10. Then will be fulfilled the saying which is written, The just—the righteous in Jesus Christ—shall live; shall not only be delivered from condemnation and death, but shall thrive in comfort, and flourish in holiness.—How? by reflecting on their sanctification, or viewing their own attainments? No; but by the infinitely more encouraging views of their completeness in Christ, and by a fresh, a repeated, a never-ceasing exercise of faith (Rom. i. 17.) on that Holy One of God.

This, I verily think, nay, this the apostle testifies, is the most effectual way of feeding that lamp, and quickening that flame, which, having cheered us in our earthly pilgrimage, will be brightened up into immortal glory in the heavens.

Here they went in; and after a slight refreshment took coach. As they were returning home, Theron observed, not without concern, the changed and melancholy aspect of things in the territories of the husbandman. The fields of corn, which a little while ago were gracefully erect, or softly inclining to the breeze, lay sunk and flatted under the impetuous rains.

Such, added Aspasio, such I apprehend will be our faith, if it aspires not after assurance, or if its assurance is erected on any endowments of our own.

Ther. If this is the case, what can be the reason why so many people are totally destitute of all religious assurance? have no notion of it, much less aspire after it? and as to full assurance, they would be much surprised, perhaps highly disgusted, at the very mention of such a doctrine.

Asp. If people never aspire after the assurance of faith, or an appropriating interest in Christ, I very much question whether they are truly awakened, or really in earnest. They are like the men of Ephraim, whom the prophet styles "a cake not turned," Hos. vii. 8.; neither bread nor yet dough, neither absolute reprobates nor real saints; or, as our Lord explains the proverb, in his charge against the church of Laodicea, they are "neither hot nor cold," Rev. iii. 15. Not frozen in insensibility, it is true; at the same time not fervent in spirit, but indifferent and lukewarm in the concerns of religion. As to a full assurance, or the highest degree of this grace, was I to declare myself more explicitly upon this point, it should be in the calm and moderate words of a judicious divine: "I do not affirm, that without a full assurance there is no faith. But this I maintain, that wherever the latter exists, there will be a sincere pursuit of the former."

Among the reasons why so few persons attain this eminent blessing, we may reckon the following:— They understand not the perfect freeness of grace, nor the immense merits of Christ: They never consider the unspeakable value of an assured faith; neither are they aware that it is intended for the enjoyment of sinners: Either they seek it not at all, or else they seek it where it is not to be found; from some works of righteousness in themselves, rather than from the gracious promise of God in his word; which is altogether as ill judged, and as sure to issue in disappointment, as if a person should go in quest

of ice amidst the torrid zone, or expect to find spicy islands under the northern pole.

But whether people consider it or no, the value of an assured faith is indeed unspeakable. When this is wrought in the heart, peace will stand firm, and afflictions drop their sting. Prayer will return laden with treasures, and death will approach stripped of its terrors. The soul will be as a watered garden, and all her graces blossom as a rose. When this is wrought in the heart, the gospel of Christ will appear with new charms, and operate with new energy. Its hymns will no longer be a strange language to your ear, nor its privileges as forbidden fruit to your palate. You will then, as you peruse each sacred page, feel it to be the power of God, and "taste that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. You will reap a benefit, and enjoy a delight, as much superior to those of the doubting reader, as the pleasure of eating this delicious peach is superior to the mere description of its agreeable relish.

Bear with me a moment longer, Theron: For you can hardly imagine what an improvement and exaltation this will give to every truth you contemplate, and every object you behold. When you contemplate the rise of kingdoms, and the fall of empires; when you recollect the many great and astonishing events recorded in the history of nations; how highly delightful must it be to say, "All these passed under the superintendency of that hand which was pierced with the bloody nail, and fastened to the cursed cross for me!" When you behold the magnificence of creation, and the richness of its furniture—the grandeur of nature, and the variety of her works—what a heightened pleasure must they all impart, if, as you view the glorious scene, your thoughts make answer to your eyes, "All these were brought into existence by that adorable person who sustained my guilt, and wrought out my justifying righteousness!"

O that we may possess this "precious faith!" *2 Pet. i. 1.*; that it may grow incessantly, "grow

exceedingly," 2 Thess. i. 3. till it be rooted like those full-grown oaks under which we lately walked, and grounded* like that well-built edifice which is still in our view.

Ther. I join with my Aspasio in this wish; and must beg of him to inform me how I may attain so desirable a blessing.

Asp. You have entirely cured me, Theron, of making apologies: would to God I might be as successfully instrumental in delivering my friend from his doubts! that the gospel might come to us as it came to the Thessalonians, "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," 1 Thess. i. 5.

Prayer is the first expedient. Every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. Christ is not only the object, but the author and finisher of our faith. "Lord, increase our faith!" was the request of his disciples, and should be the prevailing language of our hearts.

Lay up many of the divine promises in your memory. Stock that noble cabinet with this invaluable treasure. "Faith cometh by hearing," Rom. x. 17. by meditating on, by praying over this word of life, and word of grace. And never, never forget the freeness with which the promise is made, and its good things are bestowed. You are to receive the one, and apply the other, not with a full but with an empty hand; not as a righteous person, but as an unworthy creature.

Make the trial. Exercise yourself in this great secret of true godliness. I am satisfied it will be productive of the most beneficial effects. Look unto Jesus as dying in your stead, and purchasing both grace and glory for your enjoyment. Come unto God as a poor sinner, yet with a confident dependence; expecting all spiritual blessings through him that loved

* *Rooted* and *grounded*, ῥιζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι. These are the apostle's beautiful ideas, or rather expressive similitudes, each comprehended *in a single* word, Eph. iii. 18.

you, and gave himself for you. "He that believeth," with this appropriating faith, "shall not be confounded," 1 Pet. ii. 6. nor frustrated in his expectations. "He that believeth," with this appropriating faith, "shall have the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. Nothing will bring in such light and peace, such holiness and happiness to his soul. The Ephesians, thus believing, "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,"* Eph. i. 13. The dispersed of Israel, thus believing, "rejoiced with joy unspeakable," 1 Pet. i. 8. Those were marked out as rightful heirs, these were blessed with some delightful foretastes, and both were prepared for the complete fruition of life and immortality. O! that we may "be followers of their example, and sharers of their felicity!"

As for those doubts which have given you so much perplexity, and cost us so long a disquisition, look upon them as some of your greatest enemies. Oppose them with all the resolution and all the vigour of your mind. Nay, look upon those unreasonable doubts, as some of your greatest sins. Confess them with the deepest shame; and pray against them with the utmost ardour. With equal assiduity and zeal, let us press after a steadfast, an immoveable, a triumphant faith. Faith is the vehicle and the instrument of every good: "All things are possible to him that believeth," Mark ix. 23. Faith is the immediate and grand end of the whole gospel: "These things are written, that ye might believe," John xx. 31. Let us therefore covet, earnestly let us covet, this best of gifts, and "shew all diligence to the full assurance of hope," Heb. vii. 11.

* Πιστευσαντες εσφραγισθητε, not "after that ye believed, ye were sealed;" but "believing ye were sealed." In the way of believing, ye became partakers of this sealing and sanctifying Spirit.

DIALOGUE XVII.

THE next morning Theron ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and his pleasure-boat to hold itself in readiness. Breakfast being dispatched, and some necessary orders relating to the family given—Now, says he to Aspasio, let me fulfil my promise; or rather, let us execute our mutual engagement; and consign the remainder of this mild and charming day to a rural excursion.

We will take our route along one of the finest roads in the world: A road incomparably more curious and durable than the famous causeways raised by those puissant hands which conquered the globe: A road which has subsisted from the beginning of time; and, though frequented by innumerable carriages, laden with the heaviest burdens, has never been gulled, never wanted repair, to this very hour.—Upon this they step into the chariot, and are conveyed to a large navigable river, about three quarters of a mile distant from the house. Here they launch upon a new element, attended by two or three servants, expert at handling the oar and managing the nets.

Is this the road, replied Aspasio, on which my friend bestows his panegyric? It is indeed more curious in its structure, and more durable in its substance, than the celebrated Roman causeways; though I must assure you, the latter have a very distinguished share of my esteem. I admire them far beyond Trajan's pillar, or Caracalla's baths; far beyond the idle pomp of the Pantheon, or the worse than idle magnificence of the amphitheatre. They do the truest honour to the empire; because, while they were the glory of Rome, they were a general good; * and not only a monument of her grandeur, but a benefit to mankind.

* These roads ran through all Italy, and stretched themselves into the territories of France. They were carried across the Alps, the

But more than all these works, I admire that excellent and divinely gracious purpose to which Providence made the empire itself subservient. It was a kind of road or causeway for the everlasting gospel, and afforded the word of life a free passage to the very ends of the earth. The evangelical dove mounted the wings of the Roman eagle, and flew with surprising expedition through all nations. Who would have thought that insatiable ambition, and the most bloody wars, should be paving a way for the Prince of humility and peace? How remote from all human apprehension was such a design! and how contrary to the natural result of things was such an event! Most remarkably therefore was that observation of the Psalmist verified, "His ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known," Psalm lxxvii. 19.

Conversing on such agreeable subjects, they were carried by the stream through no less agreeable scenes. They pass by hills clothed with hanging woods, and woods arrayed in varying green. Here, excluded from a sight of the outstretched plains, they are entertained with a group of unsubstantial images, and the wonders of a mimic creation. Another sun shines, but stript of his blazing beams, in the watery concave; while clouds sail along the downward skies, and sometimes disclose, sometimes draw a veil over the radiant orb. Trees, with their inverted tops, either flourish in the fair serene below, or else paint with a pleasing delusion the pellucid flood. Even the mountains are there, but in a headlong posture; and, notwithstanding their prodigious bulk, they quiver in this floating mirror like the poplar leaves which adorn their sides.

Soon as the boat advances, and disturbs the placid surface, the waves, pushed hastily to the bank, bear

Pyrenean mountains, and through the whole kingdom of Spain. Some of them, towards the south, reached even to Ethiopia; and some of *them, to*wards the north, extended as far as Scotland. The remains *of several of* them continue in England to this day; though they were *made, it is* probable, above 1600 years ago.

off in broken fragments the liquid landscape. The spreading circles seemed to prophesy as they rolled, and pronounced the pleasures of this present state—the pomp of power, the charm of beauty, and the echo of fame—pronounced them transient, as their speedy passage; empty, as their unreal freight. Seemed to prophesy! It was more. Imagination heard them utter, as they ran,

Thus pass the shadowy scenes of life away!

Emerging from this fluid alley, they dart amidst the level of a spacious meadow. The eye, lately immured, though in pleasurable confinement, now expands her delighted view into a space almost boundless, and amidst objects little short of innumerable. Transported for a while at the numberless variety of beauteous images poured in sweet confusion all around, she hardly knows where to fix, or which to pursue. Recovering at length from the pleasing perplexity, she glances, quick and instantaneous, across all the intermediate plain, and marks the distant mountains; how cliffs climb over cliffs, till the huge ridges gain upon the sky; how their diminished tops are dressed in blue, or wrapped in clouds; while all their leafy structures, and all their fleecy tenants, are lost in air.

Soon she quits these aerial summits, and ranges the russet heath; here shagged with brakes, or tufted with rushes; there interspersed with straggling thickets or solitary trees, which seem, like disaffected partisans, to shun each other's shade. A spire, placed in a remote valley, peeps over the hills. Sense is surprised at the amusive appearance; is ready to suspect that the column rises, like some enchanted edifice, from the rifted earth. But reason looks upon it as the earnest of a hidden vale, and the sure indication of an adjacent town; performing, in this respect, much the same office to the eye as faith executes with regard to the soul, when it is "the evidence *of things not seen*," Heb. xi. 1.

Next she roves, with increasing pleasure, over spacious tracts of fertile glebe and cultured fields, where cattle, of every graceful form, and every valuable quality, crop the tender herb, or drink the crystal rills. Anon, she dwells with the utmost complacency on towns of opulence and splendour, which spread the sacred dome, and lift the social roof: Towns, no longer surrounded with the stern forbidding majesty of unpassable intrenchments, and impregnable ramparts; but encircled with the delicate, the inviting appendages of gardens and orchards; those decked with all the soft graces of art and elegance, these blushing and pregnant with the more substantial treasures of fruitful nature. Wreaths of ascending smoke, intermingled with turrets and lofty pinnacles, seem to contend which shall get farthest from the earth, and nearest to the skies. Happy for the inhabitants, if such was the habitual tendency of their desires! if no other contention was known in their streets!

Villas, elegant and magnificent, seated in the centre of an ample park, or removed to the extremity of a lengthened lawn, not far from a beautiful reservoir of standing waters, or the more salutary lapse of a limpid stream. Villages, clad in homely thatch, and lodged in the bosom of clustering trees. Rustics, singing at their works; shepherd, tuning their pipes as they tend their flocks; travellers, pursuing each his respective way, in easy and joyous security.

How pleasing, said Aspasio, is our situation! How delightful is the aspect of all things! One would almost imagine, that nothing could exceed it, and that nothing can increase it. Yet there is a method of increasing even this copious delight, and of heightening even this exquisite pleasure.—Let me desire my friend, answered Theron, to explain his remark; and not only to explain, but to exemplify.—If we view, resumed Aspasio, our own prosperous, and compare it with the afflicted condition of others, the method I propose will be reduced to practice. Such a dark and mournful contrast must throw additional brightness, even upon the brightest scene.

Above, the skies smile with serenity; below, the fields look gay with plenty; all around, the sportive gales

> Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
> Native perfumes; and whisper, whence they stole
> Those balmy spoils. MILTON, B. iv.

With us, all circumstances are as easy as the wafture of the boat; as smooth as the flow of the stream. But let us not forget those grievous calamities which befall our brethren in some remote tracts of the earth, or distant parts of the ocean. How many sailors are struggling, vainly struggling, with all the fury of rending winds, and dashing waves! while their vessel, flung to and fro by tempestuous billows, is mounted into the clouds, or plunged in the abyss. Possibly the miserable crew hear their knell sounded in the shattered mast, and see destruction entering at the bursting planks. Perhaps this very moment they pour the last, dismal, dying shriek; and sink, irrecoverably sink, in the all-overwhelming surge.—The traveller, in Africa's barren wastes, pale even amidst those glowing regions, pale with prodigious consternation, sees sudden and surprising mountains rise; sees the sultry desert ascending the sky, and sweeping before the whirlwind. What can he do? whither fly? how escape the approaching ruin? Alas! while he attempts to rally his thoughts, attempts to devise some feeble expedient, he is overtaken by the choking storm, and suffocated amidst the sandy inundation. The driving heaps are now his executioner, as the drifted heaps will soon be his tomb.

While we possess the valuable privileges, and taste the delicious sweets of liberty, how many partakers of our common nature are condemned to perpetual exile, or chained to the oar for life! How many are immured in the gloom of dungeons, or buried in the caverns of the mines, never to behold the all-enlivening sun again! While respect waits upon our persons, and reputation attends our characters, are there not some *unhappy* creatures, led forth by the hand of vindictive

justice, to be spectacles of horror and monuments of vengeance? sentenced, for their enormous crimes, to be broke limb by limb on the wheel, or to be impaled alive on the lingering stake. To these, the strangling cord, or the deadly stab, would be a most welcome favour; but they must feel a thousand deaths, in undergoing one. And this, too probably, is but the beginning of their sorrows—will only consign them over to infinitely more terrible torment.

While ease and pleasure, in sweet conjunction, smooth our paths, and soften our couch, how many are tossing on the fever's fiery bed, or toiling along affliction's thorny road! Some under the excruciating but necessary operations of surgery: their bodies ripped open, with a dreadful incision, to search for the torturing stone; or their limbs lopt off by the bloody knife, to prevent the mortification's fatal spread. Some, emaciated by pining sickness, are deprived of all their animal vigour, and transformed into spectres even before their dissolution. These are ready to adopt the complaint of the Psalmist: "I am withered like grass; my bones are burnt up, as it were a firebrand; I go hence like the shadow that departeth." While health, that staple blessing, which gives every other entertainment its flavour and its beauty, adds the gloss to all we see, and the *gout* to all we taste; health plays at our hearts, dances in our spirits, and mantles in our cheeks, as the generous champaign lately sparkled in our glass.

We are blessed with a calm possession of ourselves; with tranquillity in our consciences, and an habitual harmony in our temper: whereas many, in the doleful cells of lunacy, are gnashing their teeth, or wringing their hands; rending the air with volleys of horrid execrations, or burdening it with peals of disconsolate sighs. And O! what multitudes, even amidst courts and palaces, are held in splendid vassalage by their own domineering passions, or the vanities of a bewitching world! Far less innocently, far more

deplorably disordered,* than the fettered madman, they are gnawed by the envenomed tooth of envy; they are agitated by the wild sallies of ambition; or feel the malignant ulcer of jealousy rankling in their breasts. In some, avarice, like a ravening harpy, gripes: In some, revenge, like an implacable fury, rages: While others are goaded by lordly and imperious lusts, through the loathsome sewers of impure delight; and left, at last, in those hated and execrable dens, where remorse rears her snaky crest, and infamy sharpens her hissing tongue.——

Why this long pause? replied Theron. Your observations are as useful as they are just. We should all be acquainted, at least in speculation acquainted, with grief; and send our thoughts, if not our feet, to visit the abodes of sorrow;—that in this school we may learn a sympathizing pity for our distressed fellow-creatures; and see in this glass our inexpressible obligations to the distinguishing goodness of Providence, which has crowned our table with abundance, and replenished our cup with delicacies; permitting neither penury to stint the draught, nor adversity to mingle her gall. Go on, I must entreat you, with your description of comparative felicity. We have a large circuit still to make, before we arrive at our intended port; and I could wish, that your discourse might keep pace with the current.

Since you approve the subject, answered Aspasio, I will pursue it a little farther.—We, the inhabitants of this favourite isle, breathe an air of the most agreeable temperature, and most wholesome qualities. But how many nations languish under brazen skies, vaulted as it were with fire! They welter amidst those furnaces of the sun, till their "visage is burnt, and black as a coal," Lam. iv. 8. What is far more disastrous, beds of sulphur and combustible materials lie in subterraneous ambush, ready to spring the irresistible mine; ere long, perhaps, on some day of uni-

* "Give me any plague," says an apocryphal writer, "but the plague of the heart," Eccl'us. xxv. 13.

versal festivity, or in some night of deep repose, to be touched by Heaven's avenging hand. Then with what outrageous violence will they burst! rock the foundations of nature! wrench open the ponderous jaws of the earth! and swallow up astonished cities in the dark, tremendous, closing chasm!

These earthquakes, it may be, both precede and portend "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at noon-day," Psal. xci. 6. They are at once a fearful omen and a ruinous blow. The stagnating atmosphere, rank with malignant vapours, becomes a source of deadly infection; or, replete with poisonous animalculæ, is one vast incumbent cloud of living bane. If the active gales arise, they arise only to stir the seeds of disease, and diffuse the fatal contagion far and near. Unhappy people! The plague, that severer minister of divine indignation, fixes her head-quarters in their blasted provinces; and sends death abroad, "on his pale horse," Rev. vi. 8. to empty their houses, depopulate their towns, and crowd their graves.

Our island is seldom visited with either of these dreadful judgments; and has never sustained any very considerable calamity from the former. However, let us not be presumptuously secure. We have not long ago received an awful warning: The rod has been shaken; or rather the sword has been brandished over our territories. Who can forget the general consternation which seized our metropolis, on occasion of the late earthquake? And not without reason: For, of all divine visitations, this is the most terribly vindictive. The whirlwind is slow in its progress, war is gentle in its assaults, even the raging pestilence is a mild rebuke, compared with the inevitable, the all-overwhelming fury of an earthquake. When it begins, it also makes an end, 1 Sam. iii. 12.; puts a period, in a few minutes, to the work of ages, ruins all without distinction; and there is no defence from the destructive stroke.

Should Almighty vengeance stir up again those

fierce subterranean commotions; should the Most High God bid strong convulsions tear the bowels of nature, and make the foundations of the world tremble like a leaf; what, "O ye careless ones," Isa. xxxii. 11. what will you do? Whither will you fly? See! the pavement sinks under your feet. Your houses are tottering over your heads. The ground, on every side, cracks and opens like a gaping grave; or heaves and swells like a rolling sea. "A noise of crashing," Zeph. i. 10. is heard from without, occasioned by the rending streets, and falling structures. Thunders, infernal thunders,* bellow from beneath, mingled with despairing shrieks and dying groans from those wretched creatures, who are jammed between the closing earth, or going down alive into the horrible pit.†—Where now will you fly? To your strong towers? They are shattered in pieces. —To the strong rocks? They are thrown out of their place.—To the open fields? They are a frightful gulf, yawning to devour you.—Wherever you fly; in the wildness of your distraction, wherever you seek for shelter; it shall be, "as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him," Amos v. 19.

* Before the overthrow of Catania by an earthquake, a noise was heard, vast and horrid, as if all the artillery in the world was discharged at once.

† Very memorable, and equally tremendous, is the account of the earthquake that visited Sicily in the year 1693.—It shook the whole island. The mischief it caused is amazing. Fifty-four cities and towns, besides an incredible number of villages, were either demolished or greatly damaged. Catania, one of the most famous and flourishing cities in the kingdom, was entirely destroyed. Of 18,914 inhabitants, 18,000 perished.

Another earthquake, almost as dreadful, and in the same year, spread desolation through the colony of Jamaica. In two minutes time, it shook down, and laid under water, nine-tenths of the town of Port Royal. In less than a minute, three quarters of the houses, and the ground they stood on, together with the inhabitants, were quite sunk; and the little part left behind was no better than heaps of rubbish. The shock was so violent, that it threw people down upon their knees, or their faces, as they were running about for shelter. The ground heaved

Yet there is one place of refuge, which will prove an inviolable sanctuary, and a perfect security. I mean, the great, the gracious, the adorable Redeemer's righteousness. Hither let us betake ourselves. Now, before the day of desolation cometh, let us betake ourselves to this stronghold. Then shall we have no reason to fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. For thus saith God, the omnipotent and faithful God: "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem. The heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord Jesus Christ will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," Joel iii. 15, 16. Or, if the true believer is involved in the same undistinguished ruin with the ungodly, even this shall turn to his gain. It shall exempt him from the lingering pains and the melancholy solemnities of a dying bed. Like Elijah's fiery chariot, it shall speedily waft his soul to the bosom of his Saviour; while the hideous cavern, that whelms his body in the centre, shall be its chamber of rest, till the beloved Bridegroom comes, and the day of resurrection dawns.

and swelled like a rolling sea; and several houses, still standing, were shuffled some yards out of their places. The earth would crack and yawn; would open and shut, quick and fast. Of which horrid openings, two or three hundred might be seen at once. In some whereof, the people went down, and were seen no more. In some they descended, and rose again in other streets, or in the middle of the harbour. Some swiftly closing, seized the miserable creatures, and pressed them to death; leaving their heads or half their bodies above ground, to be a spectacle of terror, and a prey to dogs. Out of others would issue whole rivers of water, spouted to a great height in the air, and threatening a deluge to that part which the earthquake spared. Scarce a planting-house or sugar-work was left standing in all the island. Two thousand lives were lost, and a thousand acres of land sunk. The whole was attended with frightful noises, with brimstone blasts, and offensive smells. The noisome vapours belched forth, corrupted the air, and brought on a general sickness; which swept away more than three thousand of those who escaped the fury of the earthquake.—*See* CHAMB. *Dict.* on the word *Earthquake*.

We lift up our eyes, and behold the radiant colours which flush the forehead of the morning; we turn, and gaze upon the no less beautiful tinges which impurple the cheek of evening. We throw around our view, and are delighted with numberless forms of fertility, which both decorate and enrich our plains: whereas, other countries are overrun with immense swarms of locusts, which intercept, wherever they fly, the fair face of day; and destroy, wherever they alight, the green treasures of the ground.

Ah! what avails it, that the laborious hind sows his acres, or the skilful husbandman prunes his vineyard? that spring, with her prolific moisture, swells the bud; or, with her delicate pencil, paints the blossom? Nor grain, nor fruit, can hope for maturity, while these rapacious and baleful creatures infest the neighbourhood. They ravage the gardens, they strip the trees, and shave the meadows. Scarce a single leaf remains on the boughs, or so much as a single stalk in the furrows. "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing can escape them," Joel ii. 3.

Now, let the dreadful artillery roar from all its iron throats, and disgorge the heaviest glut of mortal hail. Now, ye sons of slaughter, men "skilful to destroy," Ezek. xxi. 31. now hurl the sulphureous globes, which kindle into a hurricane of fire, and burst in ragged instruments of ruin.—To no purpose. The linked thunderbolts are turned into stubble, the bursting bombs are accounted as straw. These armies of the air laugh at all the formidable preparations of war; "and when they fall on the sword, they shall not be wounded."* Surprising and awful destination of the everlasting God! at once to stain the pride and chastise the guilt

* The prophet Joel, foretelling the plague of locusts, gives, under the image of an embattled host, a most alarming display of their terrible appearance; their impetuous progress; the horrible dread they raise, as they advance; and the irreparable mischief they leave, as they depart.

of men! These are a despicable and puny race; clad in no coat of mail, but crushed by the slightest touch. They wear neither sword nor cimeter, nor any offensive weapon: Yet, in spite of opposing legions, they carry on their depredations, and push their conquests. Terror marches in their front, and famine brings up the rear. They spread universal devastation as they advance; and frequently give the signal for the pestilence to follow. Potent armies lose their hands, and haughty tyrants tremble for their dominions.

O that the natives of Great Britain would bethink themselves! would break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by cherishing the influences of the divine Spirit! lest this "overflowing scourge," under which some neighbouring kingdoms have severely smarted, should be commissioned to visit our borders, and avenge the quarrel of its Maker's honour. Distant as those countless legions are, with interposing seas between; yet, if God lift up a standard from far, or but hiss* unto them from the ends of the earth, "they come with speed swiftly." Who will convey this wish to the ears, who will transmit it to the hearts of my countrymen? that our land may always appear as it does at present, like the darling of Providence; may always resound with the voice of joy, and be filled with the fruits of plenty; may always wear the robe of beauty, and be adorned with the smile of peace.

How great are the advantages of peace! said Theron. Peace, at her leisure, plans, and leads out industry to execute, all the noble and commodious improvements which we behold on every side. Peace sets the mark of property on our possessions, and bids justice guarantee them to our enjoyment. Peace

* "Hiss unto them," Isa. v. 26. They come without a moment's delay, and from the remotest regions of the earth, to execute all his pleasure. Formidable and innumerable as they are, they come, I say not upon his repeated injunctions, or at his strict command, but at the first, the very smallest intimation of his will; such as the shepherds used to their flocks; such as the bee-men of old, to their swarms; or *such* as we, in these days, to some of our domestic animals.

spreads over us the banner of the laws, while we taste, free from outrage, and secure from injury, the milk and honey of our honest toil.* Amidst the tumultuous confusions of war, who could have a heart to contrive, or a hand to accomplish, any such works of dignity and use? In those days of darkness and distraction, how languid to the sight are all the dewy landscapes of spring? How insipid to the taste are all the delicious flavours of autumn? When the nation is overrun with armies, and embroiled in slaughter, "a trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind," Deut. xxviii. 65. are the dismal distinction of the times. Instead of a calm acquiescence in our portion, our very life hangs in continual suspense.

But what are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts; what are they all, compared with the blessings of the gospel? by which sinners may have "peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

This, resumed Aspasio, suggests a fresh instance of happiness, which others want, and we possess; an instance never to be omitted in our catalogue of peculiar mercies; I might add, never to be forgotten by any Christian on any occasion. While many kingdoms of the earth are ignorant of the true God, and know neither the principles of piety nor the paths of felicity; the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give the knowledge of salvation, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." While millions of rebellious angels, cast from their native thrones, are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of

* "Pax optima rerum," says the Latin poet. But the Orientals, I think, discover the most superlative esteem for this blessing, by making it the constant form of their salutations, and the subject of their most cordial wishes for their friends: "Peace be unto thee." In this short sentence, they seem to have comprised a whole volume of mercies; meaning by their single שָׁלוֹם all that the Greeks expressed by their χαιρειν, ὑγιαινειν, εὐτυχειν; i. e. a confluence of that joy of mind, that health of body, that prosperity of outward circumstances, which complete the happiness of mankind.

the great day; we, though rebellious and apostate sinners of mankind, are delivered from the wrath to come. The holy Jesus (blessed be his redeeming goodness!) has endured the cross, and despised the shame, on purpose to rescue us from those doleful and ignominious dungeons, where the prisoners of almighty vengeance

> ———Converse with groans,
> Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,
> Ages of hopeless end. MILTON.

Yes, my dear Theron, let me repeat your own important words: "What are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts—what are they all, compared with the blessings of the gospel?" This brings the olive-branch from heaven, and glad tidings of reconciliation with our offended God. This composes the tumult of the mind; disarms the warring passions; and regulates the extravagant desires. This introduces such an integrity of heart, and benevolence of temper, as constitute the health of the soul. This spreads such an uniform beauty of holiness through the conduct, as is far more amiable than the most engaging forms of material nature.

O! that thou wouldst bow the heavens! that thou wouldst come down, celestial Visitant, and make thy stated, thy favourite abode in our isle! that every breast may be animated with thy power; and every community, every individual, may wear thy resplendent badge! Then shall it be the least ingredient of our public felicity, that the sword of slaughter is beaten into a plough-share, and the once bloody spear bent into a pruning-hook. It shall be the lowest upon the list of our common blessings, that "violence is no more heard in our land, wasting and destruction within our borders. Our very officers will be peace, and our exactors righteousness. We shall call" (and the event will correspond with the name) "our walls salvation, and our gates praise." Then *shall* every harp be taken down from the willows,

and every voice burst into a song.—"In other climes"—will be the general acclamation——

"In other climes, let myriads of curious insects spin the delicate thread, which softens into velvet, stiffens into brocade, or flows in glossy satin; which reflects a lovelier glow on the cheek of beauty, and renders royalty itself more majestic. We are presented with infinitely finer robes, in the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, and the inherent sanctification of his Spirit; which beautify the very soul, and prepare it for the illustrious assembly—of saints in light—of angels in glory.

"Let eastern rocks sparkle with diamonds, and give birth to gems of every dazzling tincture. We have, hid in the field of our Scriptures, the 'Pearl of great price; the white and precious stone' (Rev. ii. 17.) of perfect absolution; a diadem which will shine with undiminished lustre, when all the brilliant wonders of the mine are faded, extinguished, lost.

"Let richer soils nourish the noblest plants, and warmer suns concoct their exquisite juices;—the lemon, pleasingly poignant; the citron, more mildly delicious; or that pride of vegetable life, and compendium of all the blandishments of taste, the pine-apple. We enjoy far more exalted dainties, in having access to the "Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations," Rev. xxii. 2.; whose boughs are replenished with a never-failing abundance of heavenly fruits; and the nutriment they dispense, is bliss and immortality.

"Let Iberian vines swell the translucent cluster, and burst into a flood of generous wine; let the Tuscan olive extract the fatness of the earth, and melt into a soft mellifluous stream: We shall neither envy nor covet these inferior gifts, so long as we may draw water out of the wells of salvation; so long as we may receive that unction from the Holy One," 1 John ii. 20., those influences of the Comforter, which not only make a cheerful countenance, but gladden the very heart; imparting such a refined satisfaction,

as the whole world cannot give—such a permanent satisfaction, as no calamities can take away.

"Let Ethiopian mountains be ribbed with marble, and Peruvian mines embowelled with gold: We want neither the impenetrable quarry, nor the glittering ore; having in our adored Messiah a sure foundation for all our eternal hopes, and an inexhaustible fund of the divinest riches.

"Be it so, that our Isis is but a creeping drop, and the Thames itself no more than a scanty rivulet, compared with the magnificent sweep of the Ganges, or the stupendous amplitude of Rio de la Plata.* The wretched natives, even on the banks of those stately rivers, are at a distance from all the springs of true consolation: whereas we have a fountain, we have a river, that issues from the ocean of eternal love. With incomparable dignity, and with equal propriety, it is styled, 'the river of life,' Rev. xxii. 1. It visits the house of the mourner, and revives the spirit of the sorrowful: It makes glad the city, and makes happy the servants of our God: It quickens even the dead; and every human creature that drinks of its water lives for ever.

"Let Asiatic islands boast their mountains of myrrh, and hills of frankincense: let Arabian groves, with a superior liberality, distil their healing gums, and ripen, for vigorous operation, their vital drugs. We have a more sovereign remedy than their most powerful restoratives, in the great Mediator's atoning blood; we have a more refreshing banquet than all their mingled sweets, in commemorating his passion, and participating his merits.

* This river is near two hundred miles broad, where it discharges itself into the sea. It pours such an immense quantity of the liquid element into the Atlantic Ocean, that fresh water may be taken up for the space of many a league. It continues thus amazingly vast through a course of six hundred miles; when it divides into two mighty branches, the Parana and the Paraguay, which, having run in separate channels, several thousand miles along the country, unite at last, and form, by their conflux, this magnificent and spacious stream, which is supposed to be the largest in the world.

" In short, we have an equivalent, far more than an equivalent, for all those choice productions, which bloom in the gardens, or bask in the orchards of the sun. We have a gospel, rich in precious privileges, and abounding with inestimable promises: we have a Saviour, full of forgiving goodness, and liberal of renewing grace; at whose auspicious approach, fountains spout amidst the burning desart; under whose welcome footsteps, the sandy waste smiles with herbage; and beneath his potent touch, 'the wilderness buds and blossoms as a rose,' Isa. xxxv. 1. Or, to speak more plainly, the desolate and barren soul brings forth those fruits of the Spirit, which are infinitely more ornamental than the silken gems of spring; infinitely more beneficial than the salubrious stores of autumn.

" We have a Saviour,—tell it out among the Heathen, that all the nations on earth may partake of the gift, and join in the song,—a Saviour we have, whose radiant eye brightens the gloomy paths of affliction; whose efficacious blessing makes 'all things work together for the good of his people,' Rom. viii. 28. Death, gilded by his propitious smile, even death itself looks gay. Nor is the grave, under his benign administration, any longer a den of destruction; but a short and shady avenue to those immortal mansions, whose 'foundations are laid with sapphires; whose windows are of agate, the gates of carbuncle, and all the borders of pleasant stones,' " Isa. liv. 11, 12.

Pardon my rhapsody, dear Theron. Your own remark, added to the grand and lovely views, have warmed, have animated, have almost transported me. —Theron answered not a word, but seemed fixed in thought.—While he is indulging his contemplation, we may just observe some other peculiarities of the prospect.

Here and there, a lonesome cottage scarcely lifts its humble head. No pompous swell of projecting steps surrounds the door; no appendent wings of inferior offices skirt the edifice; no stately hall, slabbed

with marble, and roofed with sculpture, receives the gazing stranger: but young-eyed Health, and white-robed Innocence, with sweet-featured Contentment, adorn the habitation; while Virtue lends her graces, and Religion communicates her honours, to dignify the abode; rendering the blameless hut superior in real majesty to a dissolute court.

At some distance appear the hoary remains of an ancient monastery. Sunk beneath the weight of revolving years, the once venerable fabric is levelled with the dust. The lofty and ornamented temple lies rudely overgrown with moss, or still more ignobly covered with weeds. The walls, where sainted imagery stood, or idolized painting shone, are clasped with twining ivy, or shagged with horrid thorn. Through aisles, that once echoed to the chanter's voice, mingled with the organ's majestic sound, the hollow winds roar, and the dashing storm drives. Where are now the silent cells, the vocal choirs, the dusky groves, in which the romantic saints prolonged their lonely vigils by the midnight taper; or poured their united prayers, before the lark had waked the morn; or strolled, in ever-musing melancholy, along the moonlight glade? Surely those mouldering fragments now teach (and with a much better grace, with a much stronger emphasis) what formerly their unsocial and gloomy residentaries professed;—they teach the vanity of the world, and the transitory duration of all that is most stable in this region of shadows.

Behold, on yonder eminence, the rueful memorials of a magnificent castle. All dismantled, and quite demolished, it gives a shading of solemnity to the more lively parts of nature's picture; and attempers the rural delight with some touches of alarming dread.—War, destructive war, has snatched the scythe from the hand of Time, and hurried on the steps of Destiny. Those broken columns, and battered walls; those prostrate towers, and battlements dashed to the ground, carry evident marks of an

immature downfall. They were built for ages; and for ages might have stood a defence and accommodation to generations yet unborn, if haply they had escaped the dire assaults of hostile rage. But what vigilance of man can prevent the miner's dark approach? or what solidity of bulwark can withstand the bellowing engine's impetuous shock?

Those, perhaps, were the rooms in which licentious Mirth crowned with roses the sparkling bowl, and tuned to the silver-sounding lute the syren's enchanting song. Those, the scenes of voluptuous indulgence, where Luxury poured her delicacies; where Beauty, insidious Beauty, practised her wiles, and spread, with bewitching art, her wanton snares. Now, instead of the riotous banquet, and intrigues of lawless love, the owl utters her hated screams by night, and the raven flaps her ominous wing by day. Where are the violet couches, and the woodbine bowers, which fanned with their breathing sweets the polluted flame? The soil seems to suffer for the abuses of the owner. Blasted and dishonoured, it produces nothing but ragged briers and noisome nettles, under whose odious covert the hissing snake glides, or the croaking toad crawls: Fearful intimation of that ignominious and doleful catastrophe which awaits the sons of riot! when their momentary gratifications will drop like the faded leaf, and leave nothing behind but pangs of remorse, keener far than the pointed thorn, and more envenomed than the viper's tooth.

Perhaps they were the beauteous and honoured abodes where Grandeur and Politeness walked their daily round, attended with a train of guiltless delights; where amiable and refined Friendship was wont to sit and smile, looking love, and talking the very soul; where Hospitality, with Economy always at her side, stood beckoning to the distressed, but industrious *

* I say distressed, but industrious poor;—because I would not be understood as encouraging, in any degree, the relief of our common beggars. Towards the former, I would cultivate a tender and ever-

poor, and showered blessings from her liberal hand. But war, detested war, has stretched over the social and inviting seat "the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness," Isa. xxxiv. 11. Now, alas! nothing but desolation and horror haunt the savage retreat. The ample arches of the bridge, which so often transmitted the wondering passenger along their pensile way, lie buried in the dreary moat.—Those relics of the massy portals, naked and abandoned, seem to bemoan their melancholy condition. No splendid chariots, with their gay retinue, frequent the solitary avenues. No needy steps, with cheerful expectation, besiege the once bountiful gate. But all is a miserable, forlorn, hideous pile of rubbish.

Since riches so often take to themselves wings, and fly away; since houses, great and fair, reel upon their foundations, and so tumble into dust; how wise, how salutary is our divine Master's advice! "Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness; that when the world fails around you, when the springs of nature fail within you, they, as witnesses of your charity, and vouchers for the sincerity of your faith, may receive you into everlasting habitations," Luke xvi. 9. This is to lay up treasure "for ourselves," Matt. vi. 20.; whereas, whatever else we amass, is for our heirs, for our successors, for we know not who. This wealth is truly and emphatically called "our own," Luke xvi. 12.; it is an advowson; we have the perpetuity. Whereas, whatever else we possess is ours only for a turn, or in trust.

See the dreadful, dreadful ravages of civil discord!

yearning compassion; I would anticipate their complaints; and, as a sacred writer directs, would even seek to do them good. But as to the latter, I frankly own that I look upon it as my duty to discourage such cumberers of the ground. They are, generally speaking, lusty drones; and their habitual begging is no better than a specious robbing of the public hive.

Let us then unanimously join to shake off these dead weights from our wheels, and dislodge these swarms of vermin from our state. Let us be deaf to their most importunate clamours; and assure ourselves, that, by this determined inflexibility, we do God, we do our community, we do them, the most substantial service.

Wherever that infernal fury stalks, she marks her steps in blood, and leaves opulent cities a ruinous heap.*—What thanks then, what ardent and ceaseless thanks, are due to that all-superintending, ever gracious Lord, who has dashed the torch from her hand; has broke her murderous weapons, and driven the baleful pest from our island!—May the same almighty goodness shortly banish the accursed monster from all lands!—banish the monster, with her hated associate Rapine, and her insatiable purveyor Ambition, to the deepest hell. Branded with everlasting infamy, and bound in adamantine chains, there let them gnash their teeth, and bite the inevitable curb! While Peace, descending from her native heaven, bids her olives spring amidst the joyful nations; and Plenty, in league with Commerce, scatters blessings from her copious horn. While Gladness smiles in every eye; and Love, extensive universal love, levelling the partition-wall of bigotry, cements every heart in brotherly affection.

Near those heaps of havock lies the spot, ever memorable and still revered, on which an obstinate and fatal battle was fought. The husbandman, as he breaks his fallow land, or rends the grassy turf, often discovers the horrid implements, and the more horrid effects, of that bloody conflict. He starts to hear his coulter strike upon the bosses of a rusty buckler, or gride over the edge of a blunted sword. He turns pale to see human bones thrown up before his plough; and stands aghast to think, that in cutting his furrow he opens a grave.—The grey-headed sire often relates to his grandsons, hanging with eager attention on the tale, and trembling for the event—relates the dismal, the glorious deeds of that important day:—How the fields, now covered with waving crops, were then loaded with mangled and ghastly corpses; how the pastures, now green with herbage, were then drenched and incrimsoned with human gore.

* The effects of what Virgil calls *bella, horrida bella*, were never displayed in colours that glow, and with figures that alarm, like those *which are used by* the prophet Jeremiah, chap. iv. 19, &c.

"On that extended common," he says, "where the busy shepherd is erecting his hurdled citadel, the tents were spread, and the banners displayed; the spears bristled in air, and the burnished helmets glittered to the sun.—On yonder rising ground, where the frisking lambs play their harmless frolics, stood the martial files, clad in mail, and ranged in battle array; stood war, with all its collected horrors, like some portentous cloud, ready to burst into an immediate storm.—On the nearer plain, where the quiet steed grazes in safety, and those sober oxen chew the juicy herb, the fierce encounter mixed. There the javelins, launched from nervous arms, and aimed by vengeful eyes, flew and reflew, whizzing with death. The arrows lightened * from the strings, and drenched their keen points, and dipped their feathery wings in blood.—Soon as this shower of missive steel ceased, instantly outsprung thousands of flaming swords. They clash on the brazen shields, they cut their way through the riven armour, and sheath their blades in many a gallant dauntless heart. Here, on this distinguished level, the proud presumptuous enemy, confident of victory, and boasting of their numbers, poured in like a flood. There, a bold determined battalion, of which myself was a part, planted themselves like a rock, and broke the fierce attack.

"Then," adds the brave old warrior, "then the coward herd fled before the vengeance of our conquering arms. Then these hands strewed the plains with a harvest, different far from their present productions. Then the fathers, smitten with inexpressible dread, looked not back on their children, † though

* Hab. iii. 11. The original words, literally translated, present us with that beautifully bold figure, the "lightning of thy spear;"—which, with innumerable other graces of speech, that give dignity and spirit to our modern compositions, are borrowed from the language of Zion; are transplanted from the school of the prophets. If we start into a pleasing amazement at Homer's δουρι μαινεται; have we not equal reason to be charmed and surprised at Nahum's הרכבות יתהוללו ? every chariot raged with violence and impetuosity—was eager, was even mad to destroy. Nah. ii. 5.

† For this very striking, and most terrific image, we are obliged to the prophet Jeremiah; who, in a few words, but with all the pomp of

shuddering at the lifted spear, or screaming under the brandished sword. The fathers looked not back on their children, though they fell among the slain, gashed with deadly wounds; or lay expiring, in groans of agony, under our feet."

We leave the warrior to repeat his shocking story, and enjoy his savage satisfaction. For calmer scenes and softer delights we willingly leave him.—The eye is pleased with the elegant gaiety of the parterre; the ear is soothed with the warbling melody of the grove; but grand objects, and the magnificence of things, charm and transport the whole man. The mind, on such occasions, seems to expand with the prospect, and secretly exults in the consciousness of her greatness. Intent upon these large and excursive views, our friends scarce advert to the minuter beauties which address them on every side. The swan, with her snowy plumes, and loftily bending head, notwithstanding all her superb air and lordly state, rows by without exciting admiration or obtaining notice. Equally unnoticed is both the array and the action of the duck; her glossy neck, and finely chequered wings; her diving into the deep, or her darting up into day. The swallow, skimming the air in wanton circles, or dipping her downy breast in the flood, courts their observation in vain. Nor could the finny shoals attract their regard, though they played before the boat in sportive chase, or, glancing quick to the surface, shewed their pearly coats bedropt with gold. Thus they, engaged in sublime, neglect inferior speculations. And if the sons of religion overlook the diminutive, transient, delusory forms of pleasure, which float on the narrow stream of time, or flit along

horror, describes the din of approaching war, and the consternation of a vanquished people, Jer. xlvii. 3.

Virgil has imitated the prophet's manner, in that very delicate descriptive touch, where, representing the prodigious alarm excited by the yell of the infernal Fury, he says,

"Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos."

That is, "Each frighted mother clasped the infant to her fluttering bosom."

the scanty bounds of sense; it is only to contemplate and enjoy a happiness in their God, which is elevated, substantial, and immortal. Compared with which, whatever the eye can survey, from pole to pole, from the rising to the setting sun, is a cockle-shell, a butterfly, a bubble.

From this open and enlarged scene they enter the skirts of a vast, umbrageous, venerable forest. On either side, the sturdy and gigantic sons of earth rear their aged trunks, and spread their branching arms. Trees, of every hardy make and every majestic form, in agreeable disorder, and with a wild kind of grandeur, fill the aerial regions. The huge, expansive, roaming boughs, unite themselves over the current, and diffuse "their umbrage, broad and brown as evening." The timorous deer start at the clashing of the waves. Alarmed with the unusual sound, they look up, and gaze for a moment; then fly into covert by various ways, and with precipitate speed, vanishing, rather than departing from the glade.

How awful to reflect, as they glide along the shelving shores, and the moss-grown banks; as they sail under the pendent shades of quivering poplar, of whistling fir, and the solemn sounding foliage of the oak; how awful to reflect, "These were the lonely haunts of the Druids two thousand years ago! Amidst these dusky mazes and sympathetic glooms the pensive sages strayed. Here they sought, they found, and with all the solemnity of superstitious devotion, they gathered the mistletoe.* Here the visionary recluses shunned the tumultuous ways of men, and traced the mysterious paths of Providence. Here they explored the secrets of nature, and invoked their fabled gods."

Sometimes wrapt in a sudden reverie of thought, sometimes engaged in conversation on the solemn appearance of things, the voyagers scarce perceive their progress. Before they are aware, this venerable scene

* If the reader pleases, he may see these pompous solemnities described in *Vanierii Præd. Rust.* p. 125. &c.; where the curious narrative of Pliny is embellished with the harmonious numbers of Virgil.

is lost, and they find themselves advanced upon the borders of a beautiful lawn. The forest, retiring to the right hand, in the shape of a crescent, composed what Milton styles, "A verdurous wall of stateliest aspect;" and left in the midst an ample space for the flourishing of herbage.

Here, said Theron, if you please, we will alight, and leave the bearer of our floating sedan to pursue his ceaseless course; to enrich the bosom of other valleys, and lave the feet of other hills; to visit cities, and make the tour of counties; to reflect the image of many a splendid structure which adorns his banks, and, which is far more amiable, to distribute all along his winding journey innumerable conveniencies both for man and beast; acquiring, the farther he goes, and the more benefits he confers, a deeper flow, and a wider swell; to the remarkable confirmation of that beneficent maxim, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," Prov. xi. 24.

Theron and Aspasio, walking across the spacious amphitheatre, seated themselves at the extremity of the bend. Before them lay a verdant area, quite even, perfectly handsome, but far from gay. Green was all the dress, without any mixture of gaudy flowers or glittering colours; only now and then, a gentle breeze, skimming over the undulating mead, impressed a varying wavy gloss on its surface. The whole seemed to resemble the decent and sober ornaments of maturer age, when it has put off the trappings and bid adieu to the levities of youth. The broad transparent stream ran parallel with the lips* of the channel, and drew a line of circumvallation, as it were, to guard the calm retreat. It appeared, where shaded with boughs, like a barrier of polished steel; where open to the sun, like a mirror of flowing crystal. The eastern edges of the river were barricaded with a kind of mountainous declivity, on whose rude

* The Greek, which is above all languages happy in its beautiful variety of compound words, very neatly expresses this appearance by ισοχειλης τη γη.

and rocky sides the timorous rabbit burrowed, and the bearded goat browsed. Not far from the summit two or three fountains gushed, which, uniting their currents as they trickled down the steep, formed a natural cascade: here it was lost in the rushy dells, or obscured by the twisting roots; there it burst again into view, and, playing full in the eye of day, looked like a sheet of spouting silver.

In this romantic retirement, said Theron, we are quite sequestered from society. We seem to be in a world of our own; and should almost be tempted to forget that we are encompassed with a kindred species, did not the music of those silver-tongued bells, poured from a distant steeple, and gliding along the gentle stream, bring us news of human kind.

Escaped from man and his busy walks, methinks we are come to the house of tranquillity. Such a deep undisturbed composure reigns all around! It is as if some august personage was making his entrance, or some majestic being was upon the point to speak, and all nature stood fixed in attentive expectation. No place better fitted to cherish or to inspire a contemplative sedateness.

Observe the simplicity and grandeur of those surrounding trees; the noble plainness of their verdure, and the prodigious stateliness of their aspect. What a speck are our gardens, and what a mere dwarf are our groves, compared with these vast plantations! Here is none of your nice exactness, but all is irregularly and wildly great. Here are no traces of the shears, nor any footsteps of the spade; but the handy-work of the Deity is apparent in all. Give me the scenes, which disdain the puny assistance of art, and are infinitely superior to the low toils of man. Give me the scenes, which scorn to bribe our attention with a little borrowed spruceness of shape, but, by their own native dignity, command our regard. I love the prospects which, the moment they are beheld, strike the soul with veneration, or transport it with *wonder*, and cry aloud in the ear of reason, "Ascribe

ye greatness to our God." Such, I think, in a very eminent degree, is the forest,

> ——High waving o'er the hills,
> Or to the vast horizon wide diffus'd,
> A boundless deep immensity of shade.

Asp. Solomon's refined genius seems to have been fond of the same situation, and delighted with the same objects. Therefore, at a great expense, and in the most curious taste, he built "the house of the forest." Isaiah's divine imagination was charmed with the same grand spectacle. More frequently than any of the prophets he derives his illustrations from it. One comparison I particularly remember: Speaking of the Assyrian king and his military forces, he likens them to such an assemblage of trees: Numerous, as their amazing multitudes; strong, as their massy trunks. Yet numerous and potent as they were, they should all be brought low, and laid in the dust. "For behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, shall lop the bough with terror, and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled; and he shall cut down the thickets of his forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one," Isa. x. 33, 34.

Then he passes by a most beautiful transition to his darling topic, the redemption of sinners. He gives us, together with one of the finest contrasts* imaginable, a view of the Messiah and his great salvation. When those lofty cedars are levelled with the ground, "there shall come a rod," a twig shall spring "from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots," Isa. xi. 1., which, notwithstanding its mean original and unpromising appearance, shall rear its head to the skies, and extend its shade to the ends of the earth.

* This fine contrast, and that artful transition, are, by the injudicious division of the two chapters, very much obscured, if not quite lost to many readers. The chapters, I think, should by no means be separated; but the tenth and the eleventh, as a continuation of the same prophecy, should be united.

Ther. You do well, Aspasio, to recall my roving thoughts. This magnificent solitude had captivated my imagination, and I was giving a loose to the usual sallies of my fancy; but with a willing compliance, I turn to a more excellent subject. Only I must assure you, that your remark awakens a painful idea in my mind, though a joyful one in your own: For my hopes, which were once high and lifted up, are now too much like that devoted prostrate forest.

Asp. My dear Theron, give me leave to say, they were never rightly founded. They were what Shakspeare calls, "the baseless fabric of a vision." Now theshadowy and transient hopes are demolished, that solid and everlasting joys may succeed. Let them rest on Christ, the infinitely glorious Redeemer, and they shall never be overthrown, never be removed any more.

Cast a look upon yonder ivy. What can be more feeble? It has not strength enough to withstand the slightest blast. Nay, if left to itself, its own weight would crush it to the earth. Yet, by twining around the oak, how high it rises, and how firm it stands! An emblem of our state, and a pattern for our imitation. Thus let us, who in ourselves are nothing, of ourselves can do nothing, let us fly to Christ—rely on Christ—and as Barnabas (that true son of consolation) speaks, "cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ with full purpose of heart," Acts xi. 23. Let us determine to know nothing, to desire nothing, to depend on nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Let this be the motto for our faith, this the language of our souls, "Christ is all." Then shall our virtues, though hitherto smitten with a blast, revive as the corn; then shall our hopes, though in themselves weaker than the ivy, mount like the cedars.

Ther. You can hardly imagine how a sense of guilt and unworthiness oppresses my mind. I am often discouraged, and cannot bring myself to be steadfast in faith, or joyful through hope.

Asp. You cannot bring yourself, but God Al-

mighty's power and grace can bring to pass these desirable effects. And hear what the prophet says farther upon the charming topic which introduced our discourse. Whenever the eloquent Isaiah undertakes to display a truth, he gives it all the energy, all the beauty, and every heightening touch which it is capable of receiving. This humble shoot, springing from the stem of Jesse, shall rise to such a pitch of elevation, that it shall be conspicuous far and near, and "stand for an ensign of the people." It shall be seen, not like a beacon upon the top of a hill, by the Israelites only, or the natives of a single territory; but, like the great luminaries in heaven, shall be visible in every country, and by the whole inhabited world. "To it shall the Gentiles seek," not only from the remotest, but from the most barbarous and idolatrous climes. These, even these persons, though savage in their nature, and detestable in their manners, shall be freely admitted, and find rest under his shadow. Nay, the refreshment which he yields, and the comfort which they receive, shall be not seasonable only, but of sovereign efficacy; "his rest shall be glorious," Isa. xi. 10.

From this we learn, that all the blessings of Christ's mediation are designed for Gentiles—for the most abandoned and abominable sinners; that they are so full and consummate, as to create a calm of tranquillity, a "glorious rest," in the most troubled, afflicted, guilty consciences. And I dare challenge even my Theron's misgiving mind, to specify any want which is not supplied, any grievance which is not redressed, by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I formerly encountered your objections, let me now combat your scruples.

Ther. Sometimes I have a deep and distressing conviction of my extreme sinfulness. It is like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. It is like the vilest filth, and renders me odious to myself: how much more loathsome to the all-seeing eye! It appears like a debt of ten thousand talents, and I have

nothing, no, not any thing to pay. Then I experience what the Psalmist so pathetically laments: "My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head;" and my heart is ready to fail; my hopes are upon the point to expire.

Asp. Then, Theron, fly to that just and righteous One, who is the strength of our hearts, the life of our hopes, and our portion for ever.

If sin is a sore burden; look unto Christ, who bore it all in his own body on the tree, and removed, entirely removed, that tremendous load, which would otherwise have sunk the whole world into the nethermost hell. If sin renders us filthy; let us have recourse to that blood of sprinkling which cleanses, not from a few stains only, but from all guilt; by which the most defiled transgressors become fair as the fairest wool, nay, whiter than the virgin snows, Psal. li. 7. If sin is a debt,* subjecting us to wrath, and binding us over to punishment; let us confide in that gracious Surety who has taken the debt upon himself, and made it all his own; and not only so, but has paid it to the uttermost farthing, to the very last mite; so that justice itself can demand no more.

Let me confirm and illustrate this comfortable truth by a scriptural similitude. No similitudes are more exact, and none so striking. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins," Isa. xliv. 22. A little while ago the whole expanse of yonder sky was covered with clouds. Nothing could more strongly represent a multitude of corruptions besieging the heart, and a multitude of iniquities overspeading the life. But where is now that immense arrangement of gloomy vapours? The sun has shone them, and the wind has swept them clean away. There are none, neither great nor small, remaining. From one end of the

* By these three images the Psalmist displays the horrible and destructive malignity of sin, together with the free nature and invaluable worth of evangelical forgiveness.

wide extended hemisphere to the other, we see nothing but the clear and beautiful blue of the firmament. So, saith the Spirit of God to the true believer, so totally is your guilt, however horrid and enormous, done away through the dying Jesus.

Ther. It is not possible to conceive, nor will the whole creation afford a more exquisitely fine comparison. Perhaps nothing can so emphatically describe the most prodigious multitude, entirely obliterated, without the least trace of their former existence. But I am not only chargeable with past iniquities; I am also liable to daily miscarriages. I relapse into sin; and when I would do good, evil is present with me. Nay, my best hours are not free from sinful infirmities, nor my best duties from sinful imperfections, which, like a worm at the core of the fruit, eat away the vigour of my graces, and tarnish the beauty of my services.

Asp. Because, through the frailty of your mortal nature, you cannot always stand upright; because even the just man falleth daily, and daily contracteth defilement; therefore "a fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1. The blood and atonement of Christ are compared to a heavenly fountain, in which polluted sinners may wash daily, wash hourly, and be constantly, perfectly clean. A cistern may fail, may be broken or exhausted; but it is the property of a real fountain never to be dried up, always to yield its waters. Such is the efficacy of Christ's death; not to be diminished by universal and by incessant use. It "removes the iniquity of the land," Zech. iii. 9. "It takes away the sin of the world," John i. 29. It is new for our application every morning; new, for this blessed purpose, every moment. On which account it makes complete provision for our cleansing, our restoration, and our comfort. Especially, as it is not only sovereign in itself, and always free for our approach, but is ever pleaded by a great High-priest in our behalf. Therefore the inspired casuist directs us to

this source of consolation under all the upbraidings of conscience, and all the remains of inbred depravity. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 1.

We:—St John reckons himself in the number of those frail offending creatures, who stand in need of Christ as a perpetual Intercessor. This is written, not to encourage us in the commission of sin, but that we may be the less discouraged under a sense of our infirmities. We have:—not we possibly may, but we actually have. A soul burdened with guilt cannot be satisfied, cannot be eased, with a bare perhaps. It is therefore positively affirmed, as a matter of established certainty, of which we should not admit a doubt. We have for our advocate:—not a mean person, but him who received an illustrious testimony from the most excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son," 2 Pet. i. 17. Not a guilty person, who stands in need of pardon for himself, but "Jesus Christ the righteous." Not a mere petitioner, who relies purely upon liberality; but one who has merited, fully merited, whatever he asks: "he is the propitiation for our sins," has paid our ransom, and purchased our peace. In consequence of which he claims, rather than asks our renewed, our irrevocable forgiveness. This he claims, not from an unrelenting Judge, but from his Father and our Father. And can such a plea meet with a repulse? Can such an advocate miscarry in his suit? If the prophets of old were reckoned "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,"* 2 Kings ii. 12.

* There is a peculiar beauty, and most apposite significancy, in this proverbial saying, as used by the ancient Israelites. Horses and chariots were deemed, in those ages, the principal strength of the battle, the most formidable apparatus of war. Of these the Israelites were entirely destitute. Their God had expressly forbidden them to multiply horses; and we never read of their bringing any considerable number of cavalry into the field. But, so long as they enjoyed the presence of their prophets, they wanted not this arm of flesh. They had more than an equivalent for chariots and horses, in the fervent, the effectual prayers of those holy men of God.

xiii. 14. because, like their ancestor Jacob, they had power with God, and prevailed in prayer: O! what a defence, what a security, is the divinely-excellent, and ever-prevailing intercession of Jesus Christ!

"Your graces," you complain, "are sullied, and your services defective." Then, my dear friend, renounce them in point of confidence; and gladly receive, cordially embrace, the all-perfect righteousness of your Lord. So shall your justification be complete; and your services, though deficient in themselves, be "accepted in the Beloved." I have somewhere seen, painted upon a flat surface, an awkward and disagreeable countenance; in which was nothing regular, nothing graceful, but every feature disproportionate. Yet this very face, reflected from a cylindrical mirror, has put off its deformity; the lineaments became well-adjusted; symmetry connected every part, and beauty smiled throughout the whole. Like the former our virtues appear, when compared with the immaculate purity of God, or the sublime perfection of his law; but they acquire the amiableness of the latter, when presented to the Father by our divine Mediator, and recommended by his inconceivably precious oblation. *

Milton, taking his hint from the revelations of St John, represents our great High-priest in this glorious and delightful attitude; represents him offering up the supplications and penitential duties of our first parents, mixing with them the incense of his own merits, and thus interceding before the throne:—

* "They," the persons and performances of frail men, "shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, saith the Lord," Isa. lx. 7. Which is explained by St Peter's comment, "Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. ii. 5.; and still farther ascertained by St Paul's practice, who, when he addresses the Majesty of Heaven with any petition, or presents the tribute of praise, presumes not to do either the one or the other but in the blessed Mediator's name; because, secluded from this grand recommendation, they would be offensive to the awful Jehovah, "as smoke in his nostrils;" accompanied with it, they are acceptable "as the *sweet-smelling* incense."

> See, Father! what first-fruits on earth are sprung
> From thy implanted grace in man! These sighs
> And prayers, which, in this golden censer mix'd
> With incense, I thy Priest before thee bring.
> ——Now therefore bend thine ear
> To supplication; hear his sighs though mute!
> Unskilful with what words to pray, let me
> Interpret for him; me his advocate
> And propitiation. All his works on me,
> Good or not good, ingraft: My merit those
> Shall perfect; and for these my death shall pay.
> *Par. Lost*, B. xi. l. 22, &c.

The poet's words are very emphatical. Yet words can no more express the prevalence of our Lord's negociation, than the picture of the sun can diffuse its splendour, or convey its warmth.

Ther. My spiritual wants are many. I have many duties to discharge, and many temptations to withstand; many corruptions to mortify, and many graces to cultivate, or rather to acquire. Yet have I no stock, and no strength of my own.

Asp. I rejoice that my Theron is sensible of his own indigence. The good Lord keep us both, in this respect, as little children, whose whole dependence is upon their nurse's care, or their parents' bounty! Then may we, having such a sense of our poverty, and having a great High-priest over the house of God, come boldly to the throne of grace. We may apply, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for all needful succour, and for every desirable blessing. If Solomon could say, "Lord, remember David, and all his trouble:" if Moses could say, "Lord, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants:" how much more confidently may we say, "Lord, remember Jesus, the Son of thy love! remember Jesus, and all his sufferings; Jesus, and all his merits. Shall they be sent empty away, who have their Saviour's obedience to plead?" No, verily. Though they are altogether unworthy in themselves, "yet worthy is the Lamb that was slain," for whose sake their petitions should be granted, and their every necessity supplied.

Let me repeat to you a most beautiful and encouraging portion of Scripture, which you may look upon, under all your wants, as a carte-blanche put into your hand by God all-sufficient: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High-priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 19—22.

The apostle in this place, and throughout this whole epistle, alludes to the Mosaic ordinances, in order to shew that the privileges of the Christian dispensation were typified by, yet are greatly superior to, those of the Jewish. Among the Jews, none but the high-priest was permitted to set a foot within the holy of holies; and he only on the solemn day of expiation: Whereas, all Christians are allowed to enter into the immediate presence of the most high God; may have the nearest access to him who dwells in the heaven of heavens; and this, not once in the year only, but at all times, and on all occasions. The high-priest never made that awful approach but with the blood of a slaughtered animal: We have blood of infinitely richer value to atone for our failings and recommend our addresses, even the blood of the crucified Jesus. Aaron entered through the vail of the temple, a way which was soon to become antiquated, and for ever to be abolished: We enter by a far more noble way; by the flesh of our blessed Redeemer, given as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins; which way is both new and living, such as never waxes old, will subsist to the end of time, and leads to eternal life.—Trusting in this sacrifice, and entering by this way, which are consecrated on purpose for our use, we may not only draw near, but draw near "with boldness," with an humble filial confidence; and present our supplications with *faith*—with *assurance* of faith,—with *full* assurance of faith.

How strong is the contrast, and how fine the gra-

dation! how precious the doctrine, and how free the privilege! What shall we fear, if we believe this doctrine? what can we lack, if we improve this privilege? And why should not we believe the former, why should not we improve the latter; since they both are founded, not on any excellent endowments, not in any recommending actions of our own, but purely, solely, entirely on the blood of Jesus Christ?

Ther. There may come seasons of desertion when all graces are languid, if not dead; when the light of God's countenance is suspended, if not turned into darkness; and the man is more like a lifeless log than a zealous Christian. These frames of mind I have heard mentioned, and I begin to know something of them by experience.

Asp. Then, Theron, when you "walk in darkness and see no light" of sensible comfort, "trust in the name," the unchangeable grace, "of the Lord; and stay upon" the righteousness, the consummate righteousness, of "your God," Isa. l. 10. This is not barely my advice, but the direction of an infallible guide. This agrees also with the character of a real Christian, as it is most exactly drawn by an unerring pen: "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;"* no reliance on any thing of our own, either for present joy or future glory.

To rely on the elevation of our spirits, or the enlargement of our devotion, is like building our house upon the ice; which may abide for a season, but upon the first alteration of weather ceases to be a foundation, and becomes "water that runneth apace:"

* Phil. iii. 3. *Exactly drawn*—Perhaps there is no where extant a finer, a more complete, or so lively a picture of the true Christian. It is in miniature, I own; but it comprehends all the master lines, and every distinguishing feature. "We are they, who worship God in the spirit;" with the spiritual homage of a renewed heart; with faith, love, resignation. "And rejoice in Christ Jesus;" in him look for all our acceptance with God; from him derive all the peace of our minds; and on him place all the hope of our final felicity. "And have no confidence in the flesh;" renouncing ourselves, in every view, as unprofitable servants; disclaiming all our own works and attainments as defective services.

Whereas, to derive our consolation from the Mediator's righteousness and Jehovah's faithfulness, is to build our edifice upon the rock, which "may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever." The former of these, even amidst all our changes, is invariably the same; the latter, notwithstanding all our unworthiness, is inviolably sure. Therefore the fruit of that righteousness is peace, and the effect of this faithfulness is, if not rapturous joy, yet "quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17.

So that, when it is winter in my soul, and there seems to be a dearth on all my sensible delights, I would still say with the Psalmist, "Why art thou so disquieted, O my soul? Christ is the same amidst all thy derelictions. 'He is a green fir-tree,' Hosea xiv. 8. which never loses its verdure. Under his shadow thou mayest always find repose. His merit and atonement are still mighty to save; they constitute an everlasting and infinite righteousness. The promises of God, through his mediation, 'are yea, and amen,' 2 Cor. i. 20.; are unquestionably and inalienably thine."

Ther. It is very probable I may meet with afflictions—death in my family, or disease in my person. Disappointment may frustrate my designs. Providence may wear a frowning aspect, as though the Lord had a controversy with his sinful creature, and was making him to possess the iniquities of his youth. And what will be sufficient to support and to cheer in such a gloomy hour?

Asp. The righteousness of Christ.—Nothing is so sovereign to calm our fears, and remove all apprehensions of the divine wrath. Apprehensions of the divine wrath would draw the curtains of horror around our sick-beds, and throw upon our languishing eyelids the shadow of death;* but a believing improve-

* Alluding to that description of tribulation and anguish, which, I believe, no person of sensibility can read without shuddering: "My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death," Job xvi. 16.

ment of Christ's satisfaction for our offences, clears up the mournful scene, and takes away the sting of tribulation.

Attending to this great propitiation, the sufferer sees his sins forgiven, and his God reconciled. From whence he concludes, that the severest afflictions are only fatherly corrections; shall not exceed his ability to bear; and shall assuredly obtain a gracious issue. He can fetch comfort from that cheering word, "I will be with him in trouble;" and expect the accomplishment of that most consolatory promise, "I will deliver him, and bring him to honour," Psal. xci. 15. These supports have enabled the saints to kiss the rod, and bless the hand which chastised them; to possess their souls, not in patience only, but in thankfulness also; while they have looked inward, and discerned their absolute need of these bitter but salutary medicines; have looked upward, and beheld the cup in a most wise and tender Physician's hand; have looked forward, with a joyful hope, to that better world, where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor any more pain.

Ther. The last occasion of need is the trying hour of death, and the tremendous day of judgment. Will this righteousness carry us with safety through the darksome valley, and present us with acceptance at the dreadful tribunal?

Asp. It will, it will.—This silences all the curses of the law, and disarms death of every terror. To believe in this righteousness, is to meet death at our Saviour's side; or rather, like good old Simeon, with the Saviour in our arms.—"They overcame," says the beloved disciple, they overcame the last enemy, not by natural fortitude, or philosophic resolution, but "by the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 11.; by a believing application of the victorious Redeemer's merit. "I know," adds the heroic apostle, "whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. 12.; I am assured, that my Jesus is infinitely faithful, and will not desert me;

that his ransom is absolutely sufficient, and cannot deceive me. Therefore, with a holy bravery, he bids defiance to death; or rather, triumphs over it as a vanquished enemy: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" 1 Cor. xv. 57. Nay, through the wonderful efficacy of Christ's propitiation, "death is ours," 1 Cor. iii. 22.; not our foe, but our friend and deliverer. We may number it among our treasures; and rest satisfied, that "to die, is gain.

What though our flesh see corruption? though this body, vile at present, be made viler still, by dwelling amidst worms, and mouldering in the dust? yet through his righteousness, who is the resurrection and the life, it shall shake off the dishonours of the grave; it shall rise to a new and illustrious state of existence; it shall be made like the glorious and immortal body of our triumphant Lord. If the body be so refined, so exalted, what will be the dignity, what the perfection of the soul? or rather of soul and body both, when they are happily and indissolubly united at the resurrection of the just?—Shall they have any thing to fear when the judgment is set and the books are opened? It is probable there will be no accusation, it is certain "there is no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Who shall lay any thing to their charge? "It is God,"—not man, or angel, or any creature, but God—"that justifies them." The God whose law was broke, the God to whom vengeance belongeth, he himself pronounces them innocent, because their iniquities have been laid upon Christ; he himself pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of their Redeemer; on these accounts, he himself pronounces them blessed, and gives them an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord.

But what can express, or who can imagine their happiness, when they take up their abode in the palaces of heaven, amidst the choirs of angels, and

under the light of God's countenance! when they possess the "hope of righteousness," Gal. v. 5.; when they wear "the crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 8.; and receive that great, that eternal salvation, which is an adequate recompense for the humiliation and agonies of "Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1.

Come then, my dear Theron, let us henceforth be as branches ingrafted into the heavenly Vine; derive all our sap, all our moisture, all our consolation, from his fulness. Let us live upon our all-sufficient Redeemer, as the Israelites subsisted on their manna from heaven, and their waters from the rock, and not wish for other, as we cannot possibly enjoy better sustenance.

Ther. Is this the meaning of our Lord's exhortation, when he shews the necessity of "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood?"

Asp. It is the very same. A repeated and incessant application of our Saviour's merits, for all the purposes of piety and salvation, is the kernel of this nut, the meaning of this metaphor. When we habitually advert to Jesus Christ, as dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification; performing all righteousness, that we may be entitled to an eternal crown; and interceding in heaven, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God;—then we eat his flesh, and drink his blood; then we derive a life of solid comfort, and real godliness, from his mediatorial offices; just as we derive the continuance of our natural life from the daily use of alimentary recruits.

Ther. Your discourse brings to my remembrance that magnificent and beautiful passage in Scripture, where Christ is called "the Sun of Righteousness." Your doctrine sets the comparison in a very advantageous light; gives it the utmost force and the greatest propriety.—The righteousness of Christ, according to your account, is as extensively useful in the Christian life, as the beams of that grand luminary are in material nature. The sun fills the air; where

it diffuses light, and creates day. The sun penetrates the ocean; from whence it exhales vapours, and forms the clouds. In the vegetable creation, the sun raises the sap, and protrudes the gems; unfolds the leaves, and paints the blossom; distends the fruit, and concocts the juices. Turn we to the animal world; the sun delights the eye, and gladdens the heart; it awakens millions of insects into being, and imparts that general joy which every sensible creature feels. Indeed there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Asp. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, that true and only Sun of Righteousness, arises on his people "with healing in his wings," Mal. iv. 2.; so various, so efficacious, and so extensive are his influences. Like a sun, he enlightens and enlivens; like wings, he cherishes and protects; like a remedy, he heals and restores; and all, by virtue of his righteousness, on account of his righteousness. Nor can we doubt, nor need we wonder, if we consider its nature and its author. Its nature; it is consummately excellent, has every kind and every degree of perfection. Its author; it is the righteousness and obedience of that incomparable Person, in whom "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead."

It must therefore—you will permit me to sum up in a word what has been displayed at large,—it must be fully answerable to the demands of the law, even in its highest purity and utmost exactness. It is infinitely superior to the demerit of sin, and entirely absolves from all guilt, entirely exempts from all condemnation. It is a most valid and never-failing plea against the accusations of Satan, and the challenges of conscience. It establishes an undoubted title to every blessing, whether in time or in eternity, whether of grace or of glory. It is a sure support for the Christian in an hour of desertion, and in the agonies of death. Casting anchor on this bottom, he may dismiss every fear, and ride out every storm. Leaning upon this staff, he may go down to the

repose of the grave; and neither be appalled at the solemn harbingers of dissolution, nor terrified at its far more awful consequences. The merit of this righteousness, and the power of its divine Author, will unseal the tomb; will bring forth the sleeping dust from the chambers of putrefaction, and build up the whole man into immortality and glory. By this he will be presented "without spot," Eph. v. 27.; presented "faultless," Jude 24.; yea, be presented "perfect," Col. i. 28., and with "exceeding joy," before the throne.

What a gift then is the "righteousness of Christ!" Blessed be God for all the indulgent dispensations of Providence! Blessed be God for all the beneficial productions of nature! But, above all, blessed be God for the transcendent and unspeakable gift of Christ—for the unsearchable and infinite treasures of "his righteousness."

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